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The cinematic image of Primo de Rivera

Yiddish cinema in interwar London

Taxation, film policy and the UK government

Screen

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Screen
Gilmorehill Centre
University of Glasgow
Glasgow G12 8QQ
screen@arts.gla.ac.uk

internet sites:

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issue editor

Sarah Street

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Image taken from *¡Presente! En el enterramiento de José Antonio Primo de Rivera* (1939).

GIL TOFFELL: 'Come see, and hear, the mother tongue!' Yiddish cinema in interwar London **277**

MAGGIE MAGOR and PHILIP SCHLESINGER: 'For this relief much thanks.' Taxation, film policy and the UK government **299**

VICENTE SÁNCHEZ-BIOSCA: The cinematic image of José Antonio Primo de Rivera: somewhere between a leader and a saint (Translated by John Shanks) **318**

REPORT

DAVID MARTIN-JONES and SOLEDAD MONTAÑEZ: Cinema in progress: New Uruguayan Cinema **334**

REVIEWS

DAVID TROTTER: Laura Marcus, *The Tenth Muse: Writing about Cinema in the Modernist Period* **345**

KIM KNOWLES: P. Adams Sitney, *Eyes Upside Down: Visionary Filmmakers and the Heritage of Emerson* **347**

EMMA WILSON: Martine Beugnet, *Cinema and Sensation: French Film and the Art of Transgression* **349**

KAY DICKINSON: Nurith Gertz and George Khleifi, *Palestinian Cinema: Landscape, Trauma, and Memory*; Lina Khatib, *Lebanese Cinema: Imagining the Civil War and Beyond*; Rasha Salti (ed.), *Insights into Syrian Cinema: Essays and Conversations with Contemporary Filmmakers* **351**

ROY ARMES: David Murphy and Patrick Williams, *Postcolonial African Cinema: Ten Directors*; Andrea Khalil (ed.), *North African Cinema in a Global Context: Through the Lens of Diaspora* **355**

PAUL SUTTON: Paul Cooke (ed.), *World Cinema's 'Dialogues' with Hollywood* **359**

LAURENCE RAW: Gönül Dönmez-Colin, *Turkish Cinema: Identity, Distance and Belonging*; Rekin Teksoy, *Turkish Cinema*, trans. Martin K. Thomen and Özde Çeliktemel **361**

ERNEST MATHIJS: Jeffrey Sconce (ed.), *Sleaze Artists: Cinema at the Margins of Taste, Style and Politics* **365**

BIOGRAPHIES 371

NOTES TO CONTRIBUTORS 373

'Come see, and hear, the mother tongue!' Yiddish cinema in interwar London

GIL TOFFELL

In the body of Yiddish literature that emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century, a powerfully recurrent theme was the extra-territoriality of Jewish life. In novels, plays and poetry the status of the Jews as a diasporic people was reflected upon. A significant figuration of this theme was the notion of 'Yiddishland' – a concept on which the writer and academic Jeffrey Shandler has productively expanded. For Shandler, Yiddishland should be understood as 'a virtual locus construed in terms of the presence or usage of the Yiddish language, especially – though not exclusively – in its spoken form'.¹ It is a product of a Yiddish imaginary; a homeland which, in the absence of an actually existing Jewish state, can notionally be brought into being through language. Of the variety of literary works that Shandler offers to illustrate the idea of Yiddishland, a verse of A. Almi's 1930 poem 'Yiddish' presents an exemplary vision:

Along the Vistula, along the Dniester and the Dnieper,
Along the Thames, Hudson, Mississippi,
On the plateau in the chain of the proud Andes . . .
In Siberia and in the splendid Caucasus . . .
In the tropical heat of Africa and in Rio de Janiero
In Mexico, in Cuba and Canada –
Yiddish . . . makes the rockiest soil bear fruit.²

1 Jeffrey Shandler, 'Imagining Yiddishland: language, place and memory', *History and Memory*, vol. 15, no. 1 (2003), pp. 123–49, p. 125.

2 A. Almi, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 134.

- 3 Nahma Sandrow (1977),
*Vagabond Stars: a World History
of Yiddish Theatre* (New York, NY:
Seth Press, 1986).

Whilst those with some investment in romantic nationalism could feel little beyond contempt for the 'rootless cosmopolitanism' of Jews, it is clear that for both the producers and consumers of much Yiddish culture the geographic dispersal of Yiddishland's citizens in no way hindered their imaginative habituation in a collective space.

Given this overtly internationalist orientation, it seems somewhat perverse that almost all extant studies of one area of Yiddish culture have remained rather provincial. Whilst, for instance, a 'world history' of Yiddish theatre has long been available,³ there is yet to be a thorough inventory of Yiddish cinema outside the USA. It should not be forgotten that the mass transnational movements of people in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries did not necessarily involve crossing the Atlantic. Populations shifted within the European continent, and whilst New York may have been the preferred destination for Ashkenazi Jews, many remained in the 'old' world of Europe, but in the 'West' rather than the 'East'. The task of this essay, then, is to begin to map an exhibition and reception history of Yiddish cinema that extends beyond the American context. During the interwar period some 200,000 Jews are recorded as living in London, and like their counterparts on the Lower East Side, the Jewish residents of this European metropolis maintained a diasporic culture notable in both its variety and energy. In what follows, I hope to demonstrate the relevance of Yiddish film to this life-world.

This essay develops through three schematic stages. My first move is to map the existence of a London Jewish cinema audience from the silent film era to the early years of sound cinema. Noting the variety of modes through which an ethnically specific film consumption was brought into being, I suggest that the arrival of Yiddish-language talking film in London was facilitated by a preexisting framework of Jewish spectatorship. I then discuss Yiddish cinema proper, giving both an overview of its major phases of production and a history of its exhibition in London. Here, I offer a chronological account of the films that were screened in the capital, and detail their reception in the contemporary Jewish press. Finally, I discuss the differing exhibition locations of East End and West End to offer some insight into how Yiddish cinema was socially meaningful for its audience. Utilizing the idea of the cinema as an alternative public sphere I first examine the viewing culture of East London cinemas. Moving across the city I then turn my attention to the cosmopolitan West End. Here, I discuss the Jewish press's repeated insistence on the possibility of Yiddish film to break beyond its culturally enclaved confines and productively represent Jewry within a generalized public sphere.

As a discursive object, the notion of a 'Jewish audience' is almost as old as cinema itself. Among the mythic exploits of Francis Doublier – the Lumière brothers' teenage overseas operator – perhaps most famous is a story concerning his 1898 tour of the 'Pale of Settlement' in southern Russia. Taking his shows from town to town, it is reported he

4 Francis Doublier, quoted in Ian Christie, *The Last Machine: Early Cinema and the Birth of the Modern World* (London: British Film Institute, 1995), p. 97.

5 Patricia Erens, *The Jew in American Cinema* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1984).

6 *His People* was a prestige 'Jewel' release produced by Universal Pictures; *Melody of Life* was an RKO Radio Pictures production.

encountered intense interest in the then recent Dreyfus affair amongst the Jewish residents of Kishinev. The enterprising youth quickly went about cobbling together a series of disparate images from his catalogue of short films. It was not long before he was presenting an added attraction to his Jewish viewers: 'This is the palace of justice where Dreyfus was court-martialled', a lecturer would announce as an old shot of a French public building played across the screen. Cut to a panorama of the Nile delta: 'and this is where they took him – Devil's Island'.⁴ At the end of a show, Doublier reported, many in the audience left weeping.

Doublier's emotional customers may possibly have been the first motion picture audience to be addressed in terms of their cultural identity, but they were certainly not the last. Beyond the *shtetls* of Russia's volatile hinterland both minor and major players in the filmmaking business quickly caught on to the idea of an 'ethnic' buck. Given the right conditions markets develop rapidly, and by the early twentieth century a specifically Jewish cinema audience was being exploited by an assortment of players on both sides of the Atlantic. The French film industry was quick to recognize the potential of a Jewish audience. Chronicling the terrors of a pogrom, Ferdinand Zecca made *Anti-Semitic Atrocities* in 1905. Apparently successful, it spawned a genre of 'pogrom films' that continued to exist into the late silent era. Attempts to access an increasingly sizeable pool of potential Jewish viewers were made simultaneously in the USA. In 1908 Biograph released the first of what Patricia Erens has called 'Ghetto Films';⁵ melodramas that took place in the immigrant neighbourhoods of the New World. In a break with previous unflattering and antisemitic imagery, films such as *Old Isaacs the Pawnbroker* (Biograph, 1908) and *Romance of a Jewess* (D.W. Griffith, 1908) portrayed Jews as dignified citizens doing their best to get by in a tough city setting.

As well as being viewed in their countries of origin, many of these films were distributed across the globe. In London the largest community of Jews in western Europe had settled – many living in the East End – and it is possible to document a London Jewish cinema audience. Numerous titles were shown throughout the silent period, indeed, by the mid 1920s it would appear that in any given week at least one film of 'Jewish interest' was being shown in an area with a large Jewish presence, such as Maida Vale, Stoke Newington, or more commonly the East End or West End. Such fare took a variety of forms. As already noted, many films produced with a Jewish audience in mind were popular tales of urban Jewish life made by major studios in the USA. *His People* (Edward Sloman, 1925) and *Melody of Life* (aka *Symphony of Six Million*; Gregory La Cava, 1932) are just two of many such productions that were screened at picture houses across London.⁶ Indeed, *Melody of Life* was released in early October 1932 to coincide with *Rosh Hashana*, the Jewish New Year.

So apparently appealing were these representations of contemporary Jewish experience to Anglo-Jewish cinemagoers that a group of enthusiastic amateurs was inspired to create its own 'story of Jewish

7 *Jewish Chronicle*, 9 October 1931, p. 30.

8 *Jewish Chronicle*, 25 January 1929, p. 12.

9 *Jewish Chronicle*, 4 December 1925, p. 26.

10 *Jewish Chronicle*, 15 October 1926, p. 32.

11 Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991).

12 See *Jewish Chronicle*, 20 March 1925, p. 35.

13 See *Jewish Chronicle*, 27 March 1925, p. 27.

life'.⁷ One of several Jewish film societies to appear in London around the end of the 1920s, the Jewish Amateur Film Society was inaugurated with the aim of making 'a thorough search of Jewish history for film subjects'.⁸ After some months and several benefit dances, a film with the decidedly modern title *The Ghetto* had been completed and was being screened at various one-off locations, including the Walthamstow and Leyton Social and Literary Club. Although no prints remain in existence, the name of the piece is richly suggestive. It does not seem so outlandish to imagine that scenes of Manhattan street activity and tenement life in *His People* might have been every bit as influential on the production process as the novels of Israel Zangwill.

In addition to the output of Hollywood, Jewish London was privy to screenings of films with somewhat lower production values and with limited exhibition. Documentaries of the 'old country' seem to have been popular: a travelogue 'of enthralling interest' and 'depicting scenes from Jewish life in Russia and the Ukraine' played at the Marble Arch Pavilion in December 1926.⁹ Similarly, there was something of a vogue for Zionist films recording early attempts at nation building in Palestine. One, *Hanoar Be'erez Israel/Young Palestine: Eretz Yisrael in 1926* (Ya'akov Ben Dov, 1926), apparently 'showing the wonderful progress made in the past year in the work of rebuilding the Holy Land'.¹⁰ Often films such as these had the status of a special event. A number of screenings of *Young Palestine* were accompanied by speeches delivered by assorted dignitaries (such as the editor of the *Jewish Times* Morris Myer, or the Rt. Hon. J.C. Wedgwood, MP), whilst other films were shown as part of a fundraising effort on behalf of some charity (*L'Chayim Hadashim/Land of Promise* [Judah Leman, 1934] was, for instance, shown in 1937 in aid of the Hampstead District Nursing Association).

It is interesting to note that feature films with a generalized mode of spectatorial address continued to be consumed as culturally specific fare by Jewish audiences well into the era of classical film narration. In contrast to films such as *The Black 107* (S. Gordin, 1913), which had been explicitly produced for Jewish cinemagoers, the premiere feature productions of the 1920s – *The Ten Commandments* (Cecil B. DeMille, 1923) or *The Golem* (Carl Boese and Paul Wengerer, 1920), for example – assumed universal appeal. As Miriam Hansen has argued, central to the institutionalization of a mass cinema audience was the development of a standardized spectatorial position.¹¹ Real-life audiences can, however, be stubborn, not necessarily receiving films in a predictable manner. Thus, apparently thanks to the appeal of its Old Testament narrative, *The Ten Commandments* received repeated screenings in cinemas popular with Jews – one 'by special request' in the Kenninghall Cinema in Clapton.¹² Similarly, representations of Jewish Prague in *The Golem* made it something of a favourite in Jewish London; indeed it was even part of a special presentation 'in aid of the West End and West Central Talmud Torah' at the Scala in Charlotte Street, central London.¹³

Fig. 1.

Advertisement for *Loyalties*,
Jewish Chronicle, 3 November
 1933. Image reproduced courtesy
 of British Library.



In addition to newspapers such as the *Jewish Chronicle* alerting readers to the movies *Di gebrokhene Hertser/Souls in Exile* (Maurice Schwartz, 1926) and *Two Worlds* (Ewald André Dupont, 1930) for their ‘strong Jewish interest’,¹⁴ localized areas of the film industry involved in distribution, promotion and exhibition seem to have recognized the continued existence of a specifically Jewish audience, heavily promoting films that might appeal to Jews in the Jewish press. The biblically inspired *Noah’s Ark* (Michael Curtiz, 1928), for instance, was advertised in the *Jewish Chronicle* in a series of eye-catching notices. Over several weeks a succession of changing advertisements were placed in the paper featuring a different illustration with each new issue. One particularly charming image shows the ark, afloat on a vast sea, passing under a rainbow.¹⁵ It is impossible to know whether the advertisements for *Noah’s Ark* were created especially for their inclusion in the *Jewish Chronicle*, but it is certainly clear that advertisers did design publicity for individual newspapers. Notices in the *Jewish Chronicle* for the film *Loyalties* (Basil Dean and Thorold Dickinson, 1933) stated that Basil Rathbone starred ‘as the Jew’, and carried the tagline ‘the picture all Jews should see!’ (figure 1). It is somewhat difficult to imagine such an assertion being placed in a Rothermere publication.¹⁶

Given the immense cultural impact of film stars during the interwar period, it is hardly surprising that Jewish audience members were particularly interested in actors with some Jewish lineage. In conversation with an octogenarian Jewish East Ender, I learnt that he changed his name from ‘Kominsky’ – ‘which the English could never bloody spell!’ – to ‘Kaye’, due to his admiration for Danny Kaye.¹⁷ In numerous reports the Jewish press recounted the latest successes of stars such as Paul Muni, Fanny Brice and Al Jolson. Particularly popular during the 1930s was Eddie Cantor, and in one extended article the *Jewish Chronicle* noted his ‘deep pride in his Jewishness’ and how a ‘crowd estimated at 5000 assembled’ when he had visited a Whitechapel restaurant whilst on a trip to London.¹⁸ Quick to pick up on the appeal of Jewish stars, advertisers marketed films to London’s Jews by highlighting the participation of favoured performers. Typical was a

¹⁴ *Jewish Chronicle*, 23 March 1928, p. 60, and 15 May 1931, p. 28.

¹⁵ See *Jewish Chronicle*, 10 May 1929, p. 35.

¹⁶ Lord Rothermere (Harold Sidney Harmsworth, First Viscount Rothermere) was proprietor of the British *Daily Mail* newspaper and famously supportive of a policy of appeasement of Nazi Germany. In 1934 a series of articles (some penned by Rothermere) were published in his paper championing Oswald Mosley’s virulently antisemitic British Union of Fascists. The most notorious of these was headlined ‘Hurrah for the Blackshirts’.

¹⁷ As part of my ongoing research into Jewish cinemagoing in London – Gilad Toffell, ‘The cinema as a communal institution in Jewish London 1925–1950’ (Dissertation: University of London, 2007) – I have conducted oral history interviews with Jewish senior citizens who lived in the East End during the 1930s. I refer to this interview material throughout this essay.

¹⁸ *Jewish Chronicle*, 11 January 1935, p. 70.

¹⁹ *Jewish Chronicle*, 21 November 1930, p. 43.

²⁰ *Jewish Chronicle*, 20 October 1934, p. 45.

²¹ *Jewish Chronicle*, 12 October 1934, p. 43.

²² *Jewish Chronicle*, 7 July 1933, p. 45.

²³ *Jewish Chronicle*, 6 January 1928, p. 12.

²⁴ *Jewish Chronicle*, 9 December 1927, p. 12.

²⁵ See *Jewish Chronicle*, 2 December 1938, p. 52.

²⁶ Judith N. Goldberg, *Laughter Through Tears: the Yiddish Cinema* (London: Associated University Presses, 1983), p. 17.

²⁷ J. Hoberman, *Bridge of Light: Yiddish Film Between Two Worlds* (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1991).

prominent notice for the film *Whoopee* (Thornton Freeland, 1930) featuring the aforementioned Cantor. Taking up a quarter of a page, the notice was dominated by a caricature of Cantor's face, with his name emblazoned across the top in bold letters.¹⁹

That a London Jewish cinema audience should be understood as a concrete and enduring social reality and not merely some rhetorical figure was taken as given in the Jewish press throughout the interwar period. In numerous articles London's Jews were addressed as a specific kind of spectator. 'Jewish patrons of the cinema', announced the *Jewish Chronicle* in one 1934 piece, 'will assuredly be intrigued by "Jew Suss"' (Lothar Mendes, 1934).²⁰ These 'Jewish patrons' were described as having a different kind of cinematic experience to gentile cinemagoers. With dispositions and concerns of a special nature, they are noted to have 'awaited this film with not a little anxiety'.²¹ Similarly, in relation to the filmic adaptation of John Galsworthy's play *Loyalties*, 'Jewish visitors' are reported to 'feel proud of the dogged courage of [the Jewish protagonist] De Levis'. 'Non-Jews', on the other hand, are described as being 'impressed that the problem of what Zangwill called the "dislike of the unlike" is handled with a just appreciation of both sides of the question'.²²

Paradoxically, the Jewish cinema audience as a reflexive, self-conscious object can perhaps best be traced through a kind of negative definition. Widely criticized for having an 'anti-Jewish bias'²³ that might lead to the initiation of pogroms, the Cecil B. DeMille story of Christ's life *The King of Kings* (1927) became branded 'the lie of lies'²⁴ and was subject to much debate in the Jewish press. Such was the strength of feeling that the studio was forced to restrict exhibition in Eastern European countries – where it was believed antisemitism was most virulent – after a boycott of the film was enacted by many Jewish viewers. Later, with the Nazis' ascent to power in Germany, a significant number of Jews refused to watch German films and petitioned cinemas not to exhibit them. Indeed, in 1938 the managing director of the Berkeley cinema in London's Mayfair – a Miss Elsie Cohen – was obliged to write to the *Jewish Chronicle* and assure potential audiences that rumours suggesting films made during the Nazi era would be exhibited were unfounded, and that patronizing the cinema would not entail unintentional support for Hitler.²⁵

It would seem that the stubborn continued existence of Jewish audiences meant a specifically Yiddish cinema could form part of the cultural and recreational life of London's Jewry. Judith Goldberg has estimated that approximately 130 feature films and thirty short Yiddish-language films were made between 1910 and 1941.²⁶ Several histories of Yiddish film have been written documenting this unique cinematic form, and J. Hoberman has isolated four distinct stages in its development.²⁷ The first of these encompasses the period from 1911 to the middle of World War II, with Warsaw providing a focus for production. The main source

of material was the work of New York-based Yiddish writers, with plays by Jacob Gordin perhaps proving most popular. According to Hoberman numerous films were produced, though virtually none of these survive. The next period began with the success of the Russian Revolution and a remapped Europe following the end of the war. Poland, Austria and the newly communist Russia all housed important studios. During this time films based on Yiddish plays were somewhat less prominent, and instead the work of Jewish novelists Shalom Aleichem, Isaac Babel and Joseph Opatoshu was drawn on. For Hoberman, 'in general, the Yiddish films of the late silent era were progressive . . . exhibiting the influence of various vanguard tendencies – Symbolism, expressionism, Futurism, communism'.²⁸ It was during the final years of the 1920s that this phase of production came to an end.

The third stage of Yiddish cinema, coinciding with the early development of talking pictures, took place almost without exception in the USA. Several original, well-produced features were made and populist fare such as *His Wife's Lover* (Sidney M. Goldin, 1931) proved a hit with audiences. *Uncle Moses* (Sidney M. Goldin and Aubrey Scotto, 1932) perhaps stands out as most technically accomplished and – with its script taken from a Sholem Asch novel and starring Maurice Schwartz – it was certainly the most artistically prestigious project from this period. Many films, though, were designated *shund*, that is, trash. Typically, *shund* movies were set-bound overwrought melodramas with poor sound recording and juddering camera movements. The cheapest films were merely old silent pictures that contained some Jewish interest and had been overdubbed into Yiddish. Importantly, however, *shund* – as Nahma Sandrow notes – 'was the first art form to express the distinctively American Yiddish community'.²⁹ It was also widely distributed, and films made in this phase of production were regularly exhibited in countries other than that of their origin. Of all the Yiddish language talkies shown in London, the majority was produced in the USA during the early 1930s.

The fourth and perhaps most widely known phase of Yiddish film production can be dated to begin with the release in 1936 of *Yidl mitn fitl / Yiddle With His Fiddle* (Joseph Green). There were production centres in Poland and the USA, and a steady flow of notable films came from both sides of the Atlantic until the outbreak of war in Europe. During this period Yiddish plays and novels were again adapted for the screen, though much new material was originated. This was reflected in the diversity of the films that went into production at this time. Features rooted in a tradition of Yiddish modernist enterprise, such as *Der Dibuk / The Dybbuk* (Michael Waszynski, 1937), vied with jolly musicals and favourites from the Yiddish stage like *Mirele Efros* (Josef Berne, 1939). In comparison with primitive earlier efforts at a Yiddish-language cinema, these films contained relatively high production values and some were liberally peppered with an ostentatious use of cinematic technique. In *The Dybbuk*, for instance, the spectator is treated to the repeated

spectacle of the character of the supernatural messenger magically vanishing and reappearing. The directors working on these films were also increasingly keen to stamp a mark of authorship on their creations. Discussing his approach to making the landmark *Green Fields* (Jacob Ben-Ami and Edward G. Ulmer, 1937), Ulmer stated: 'I'm going to have my own style and I'm going to do it like I see it'.³⁰

As home to a thriving Yiddish theatre, it is perhaps slightly surprising that no Yiddish films were produced in the UK. Nevertheless, from the early part of the twentieth century a number of Yiddish films were shown in that country, the vast majority in London. In his encyclopaedic guide to Anglo-Yiddish culture, Leonard Prager lists several silent productions with Yiddish intertitles being screened in the east of the city; a couple – *Der Yid* and *Der Mesiekh* – in the Commercial Road's Palaseum cinema, a one-time Yiddish theatre.³¹ But there is perhaps a question mark hanging over the 'Yiddishness' of some of these silents. Throughout the silent era a single film would frequently be tailored to allow it to be marketed in different ways to different ethnic groups and nationalities. Thus it is entirely possible that films with little to distinguish them as relating in any way to a Yiddish culture were exhibited with Yiddish titles. Conversely, there may have been some films exhibited that contained a Yiddish element to the show that has now been overlooked. In an advertisement for a film entitled *Kaddish*, the picture is billed as 'a story of the ghetto with love, laughter and tears'³² and contains a Star of David and a sketch of Ashkenazi familial closeness in the illustration. Obviously the film's narrative had a considerable Jewish content, but with no prints apparently in existence it is impossible to know whether it contained Yiddish intertitles or whether the advertised 'incidental music by the Isodore Berman male voice choir' contained Yiddish singing.³³ That such questions plague all histories of early Yiddish cinema is the central reason for this essay's focus on the sound era.

Following a business trip to London by the New York-based Judea Films representative Moe Goldman in 1930, what were advertised as 'the first Jewish talkies in Great Britain' were screened at the Pavilion Theatre in Whitechapel (in East London) in April and May of 1931.³⁴ The distribution deals appear to have been struck with Morris Susman, a Latvian-born Jew who divided his time between his East End printing and bookselling business and work as an impresario for the Yiddish stage. Certainly it is Susman's name that is credited on the advertisements. Over a period of two weeks, six Yiddish films were screened in continuous performances in the Pavilion between the hours of 2 pm and 11 pm. The programme comprised various Judea Films productions directed by Sidney M. Goldin: *Oy! Doctor* (1930) starring 'the Yiddish Charlie Chaplin';³⁵ Manashah Schnolnick; *Yidishe Nigun/The Jewish Melody* (1930); an adaptation of a Harry Kalmanowitz melodrama entitled *Eibike Naronim/Eternal Fools* (1930); *Style and Class* (1930); and a 'two reeler' revue with comic dancers Marty

³⁰ Edward G. Ulmer, quoted in Goldberg, *Laughter Through Tears*, p. 84.

³¹ See Leonard Prager, *Yiddish Culture in Britain: a Guide* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1990), p. 64.

³² See *Jewish Chronicle*, 5 August 1927, p. 30.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ See *Jewish Chronicle*, 17 April 1931, p. 41.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

Baratz and Goldie Eisman, *Natascha* (1930); plus the earlier prestige Universal-produced silent feature *His People*.

Six months later a further batch of Judea/Goldin films was distributed in London, all of them screening at the Charlotte Street Scala. *Mayn Yidische Mame/My Yiddishe Mama* (1930) headed the bill and was described as a 'powerful drama of mother love!' in eye-catching advertisements utilizing both English and Yiddish type.³⁶ Taking its title from a Sophie Tucker song, the film was a melodrama of discord between old and new generations. Screened alongside the main feature was *The Jewish Gypsy* (1930), *Land of Freedom* (1930), *Oy! Doctor* and *Kol Nidre* (1930). Again the films were well reviewed in the Jewish papers. The *Jewish Chronicle* reported that *My Yiddishe Mama* was 'a wonderful success at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York',³⁷ whilst the *Jewish Times* asserted that 'nobody should miss seeing the films at the Scala Theatre'.³⁸

The cultural impact on contemporary London Jewish life by this first phase of Yiddish talking films seems to have been considerable. Deploying that key mark of self-identification for Ashkenazi Jews – language – the first advertising notices carried a prominent header reading (in Yiddish): 'COME SEE! AND HEAR! THE MOTHER TONGUE!'.³⁹ In the Jewish press their appearance received heavy coverage.⁴⁰ In relation to the first two weeks of presentations in April 1931, the *Jewish Chronicle* ran two articles about the films whilst the Yiddish-language daily the *Jewish Times* printed no less than eight pieces on them – four of which made the front page. All were complementary of the films, gave details of star appearances and plotlines, and urged their readers to attend the screenings, noting how they 'were nice to hear' and how one should 'support the Yiddish word'.⁴¹ The films were also given some sort of imprimatur of institutional support when the Mayor of Stepney presided over the opening ceremony at the Pavilion Theatre. According to the *Jewish Times*, his speech noted the importance of showing films in the Yiddish language.⁴² Later screenings of Yiddish films had equal emphasis placed on their cultural specificity and the pleasures therein. The mother tongue – *mama loshn* – was again deployed by promoters in September 1931, this time in advertisements for *My Yiddishe Mama*.⁴³

For the next few years Yiddish films appeared with a degree of regularity on the cinema screens of London's East and West Ends. Promoted as 'the first all-Jewish musical comedy talking picture',⁴⁴ *His Wife's Lover* starring the well-known Yiddish comedian Ludwig Satz was shown at the Windmill Theatre near Piccadilly Circus in December 1931. A review in the *Jewish Times* noted that it was 'pleasant for the ear'.⁴⁵ *The Voice of Israel* (J. Seiden and A. Chasin, 1930) was a rather idiosyncratic piece, belonging to a subgenre of Yiddish films known as 'cantorials'. The cantorial film typically involved a performance by a Jewish religious singer (*chazan*), and in *The Voice of Israel* seven of the most famous US-based cantors appeared. Singing liturgical pieces, their performances were intercut with a Yiddish narration recounting Jewish

36 See *Jewish Chronicle*, 18 September 1931, p. 23.

37 Ibid., p. 25.

38 See *Jewish Times*, 25 September 1931, p. 4.

39 See *Jewish Times*, 19 April 1931, p. 3. My thanks to Mark Glancy for pointing out that this slogan bears a striking resemblance to 'See and hear it – our mother tongue as it should be spoken', the tagline used to advertise Hitchcock's *Blackmail* during its 1929 British release.

40 Of the two Anglo-Jewish newspapers drawn on in this article, the *Jewish Chronicle* had by far the larger readership. Founded in 1841 it was distributed nationally on a weekly basis. Long conceiving of itself as the official voice of Anglo-Jewish interests, a subheading on the publication's masthead declared the paper 'The Organ of British Jewry'. The *Jewish Times* (*Di Tsait*) was a long-established Yiddish-language daily of about eight pages. Produced in the East End of London it had a keen awareness of the political and cultural dispositions of its proletarian readership.

41 *Jewish Times*, 19 April 1931, p. 1.

42 See *Jewish Times*, 21 April 1931, p. 3.

43 See *Jewish Times*, 25 September 1931, p. 5.

44 *Jewish Chronicle*, 4 December 1931, p. 40.

45 *Jewish Times*, 8 December 1931, p. 2.

46 *Jewish Chronicle*, 17 February 1933, p. 36.

history and an assortment of visual footage. This included dramatic shots of erupting volcanoes, Jews praying in Eastern Europe and Jerusalem, and documentary footage of Zionist work in Palestine. As extravagant as the film's content was its writeup in the Jewish press, with the *Jewish Chronicle* describing it as 'A dramatic talking motion picture presentation of the experiences of a people whose life throbs with endless drama and tragedy'.⁴⁶ It exhibited for two runs during 1933, in February at Cinema House at Oxford Circus in central London and in August at the East End's Rivoli cinema.

Also shown in 1933 in the East End was *Uncle Moses*, which screened at Whitechapel's Pavilion Theatre for one week. Written by Sholom Asch and published in the New York Yiddish newspaper *Forverts*, *Uncle Moses* first saw light as a serial in 1917, being released in book form a year later. A popular if minor addition to the canon, it was then adapted for the stage by the actor Maurice Schwartz who presented it, with himself as the titular lead, during the 1930–31 New York theatre season. Despite mixed notices production went ahead on a filmed version, and a little over a year after its US presentation it was released in London and received good reviews, the *Jewish Times* calling it a 'wonderful film'. Much praise for the piece was directed at the figure of Schwartz, who was at that time extremely well respected in Yiddish theatrical circles. Noting that this was 'Maurice Schwartz's first Yiddish talkie', the review went on to describe him as 'the great actor' whose performance 'impacts with his whole acting ensemble'.⁴⁷

47 *Jewish Times*, (February 3, 1933), p. 4.

Such an emphasis on a Yiddish artist was in fact quite a common feature of the discourse surrounding the release of a Yiddish film. Ludwig Satz caused something like mild hysteria in the Jewish press when his onstage appearance at the Pavilion coincided with the London release of *His Wife's Lover* during late 1931. In addition to stating that the performer had 'excited a storm in the London public', the *Jewish Times* asserted that 'Satz is not only the greatest character actor on the Jewish stage, but he has also created the first musical comedy in a talking film'.⁴⁸ Similarly, the *chazans* appearing in *The Voice of Israel* were talked of like international stars in the British Jewish papers. Slavishly listing their names, each review noted the participation of 'Zaydl Rovner, Shapiro, Shlisky, Hershman, Rosenblatt, Katshko, Roitman, Waldman'.⁴⁹ Advertisements for the film played on the singers' celebrity too, with the extraordinarily successful 'Yosele' Rosenblatt (who appeared in *The Jazz Singer* [Alan Crosland, 1927]) featuring in a photograph (figure 2).

48 *Jewish Times*, 4 December 1931, pp. 1–2.

49 *Jewish Times*, 22 February 1933, p. 2.

Reflecting a downturn in the US-based industry, 1934 proved a quiet year with apparently no Yiddish films screening in London. In early 1935, however, Yiddish-language cinema returned to both East and West End screens. The film *Bar Mitzvah* (Harry Lynn, 1935) was shown at the Mile End Empire, starring the 'matinee idol of the Yiddish stage' Boris Tomashevski.⁵⁰ More notably, *The Eternal Wanderer* (G. Roland, 1933) first screened at the centrally located Forum Cinema in Villiers Street and

50 Goldberg, *Laughter Through Tears*, p. 94.

Fig. 2.
Advertisement for *The Voice of Israel*, *Jewish Chronicle*, 17 February 1933. Image reproduced courtesy of British Library.



then moved to the East End's Mile End Empire in March 1935. Recounting the persecution of a Jewish painter in 1930s Germany, the film received much coverage in the Jewish press due to the use of documentary footage of the recent Nazi book burning in Berlin. It also garnered notoriety due to its uncertain certification status. First submitted to the British Board of Film Censors by one Mr J. Pearson on 9 March 1934, it was issued with a total rejection certificate on 16 March. A letter from the BBFC to the London County Council reveals that 'exception was taken to the film on the ground that its propagandist nature rendered it unsuitable for exhibition in this country'.⁵¹ Also in the letter was the information that the submitting party, Mr Pearson, 'had been associated with the American film trade for about six years and had come to the country with the express purpose of exploiting the film referred to'; it was added that Mr Pearson was 'discovered to be a Parsee'.

Accepting defeat, Pearson seems to have passed on the distribution rights to Dan Fish, a recognized figure in the London film distribution business. Believing the film to be something other than a hopeless cause, Fish appealed to the London County Council for a review of the ban and, in a letter dated 29 October 1934, argued that the 'picture possesses exhibition value only to the limited cinemas that cater for Jewish audiences'.⁵² Following a closed screening attended by a committee made up of representatives of Surrey and Middlesex County Councils as well as LCC members, the committee chairman, Hubert L. Foden-Pattinson, concurred with Fish. In the official report dated 23 November 1934, he commented that 'the film is a dignified and passionate protest against the persecution of the Jews in Nazi Germany', and that the

⁵¹ London Metropolitan Archive (hereafter LMA), file GLC/DG/EL/01/250.

⁵² LMA, file GLC/DG/EL/01/250.

Fig. 3.
Advertisement for *Yiddle with his Fiddle*, *Jewish Times*, 16 July 1937. Image reproduced courtesy of British Library.



53 LMA, file GLC/DG/EL/01/250.

54 For a fuller history of *The Eternal Wanderer's* exhibition in London, see Toffell, 'The cinema as a communal institution'.

55 *Jewish Times*, 21 July 1937, p. 3.

committee was 'of the opinion that the film, which will appeal primarily to Jewish audiences, is not likely, although admittedly "propaganda", to be injurious to morality or to be offensive to public feeling in England'.⁵³ This allowed for the film to be shown in any cinema in the London area.⁵⁴

Creating an unprecedented impact on Jewish audiences, however, was the release of *Yiddle With His Fiddle*, which was first screened at the Academy cinema in Oxford Street on 21 July 1937 (figure 3). A musical comedy, the film charts the adventures of a young woman and her father in the Polish countryside. Forced to leave their *shtetl* due to poverty, the daughter 'Yiddle' disguises herself as a boy to avoid unwanted attention and the pair try their luck as travelling musicians. With considerable production values, good songs and a memorable turn by its star, Molly Picon, the film received ecstatic reviews in the Jewish press. In an extended report one writer described the film as an 'important accomplishment that has long been strived for', and announced that 'perhaps for the first time with us in West-Europe is, with the film *Yiddle With His Fiddle*, a successful creation, a good realistic romantic image of Jewish peoples' lives'.⁵⁵ After eight weeks in the West End it moved to the sizeable Rivoli cinema in Whitechapel High Road, and thence to three other East End cinemas. It also screened in Hackney, Cricklewood and at picture houses outside London. In November that year it was still showing at the Mayfair cinema in Whitechapel's Brick Lane. If publicity material is to be believed, over 90,000 tickets were sold when it was exhibited at the Academy, and 35,000 in seven days of screenings at the *Rivoli*.

Unsurprisingly, such popularity triggered a new desire in exhibitors to bring Yiddish-language productions to their movie houses. Old favourites were again shown, with *Uncle Moses* in the West End at the

⁵⁶ The rerelease of *Uncle Moses* prompted – unusually – a somewhat critical review from the *Jewish Chronicle* (2 September 1938, p. 40), which found the story of marriage between individuals of disparate age distasteful. Typically, reviews for Yiddish films in the Jewish press were uniformly positive.

⁵⁷ *Jewish Chronicle*, 22 July 1938, p. 56.

⁵⁸ *Jewish Chronicle*, 16 February 1940, p. 31.

⁵⁹ *Jewish Chronicle*, 5 April 1935, p. 67.

⁶⁰ *Kinematograph Weekly*, 3 December 1931, pp 35–6.

⁶¹ *Bioscope*, 2 December 1931, p. 18.

⁶² *Ibid.*

Academy, and then in the East End at the Rivoli in September 1938.⁵⁶ *The Eternal Wanderer* also returned for a couple of performances as a ‘special showing’ at the Charing Cross Road Phoenix Theatre in July of that year. The *Jewish Chronicle* noted that the film had been screened before in London but asserted that ‘it is as topical today as it was then’.⁵⁷ The final Yiddish film to be distributed in London on a first run was the Molly Picon vehicle *Mamele* (1938), directed by Joseph Green and Konrad Tom. Shown at the Academy cinema in February 1940, the *Jewish Chronicle* noted it was ‘the last film to be made in Poland before the invasion’.⁵⁸ The article also reported that ‘Molly Picon is now in New York, but many members of the cast have not been heard of since the war’. The Yiddish markets would, of course, never recover.

It would probably be accurate to describe the relationship between the London Yiddish cinema business and the mainstream British film distribution system as uncertain. For some films distributors employed the established pattern of trade show followed by reviews in the trade press to market their product, for others this procedure was apparently bypassed. Instead direct arrangements with individual exhibitors or an informal network of Jewish business contacts seem to have been relied upon. The *Jewish Chronicle*, for instance, carried a short notice in its film pages in March 1935 directing ‘the number of people who have made enquiries regarding the booking of *The Eternal Wanderer*’ to the distributor, Dan Fish.⁵⁹ A key factor in determining whether a preview was offered in the form of a trade screening seems to have been exhibition location (see figure 6, at end of article, for a tabular illustration of exhibition location). The majority of West End exhibition runs were preceded by such a screening, whilst films shown exclusively in the East End received no preview.

The first Yiddish-language talkie offered to buyers via a trade show was *His Wife’s Lover*, which was screened at the *Windmill Theatre* on 4 December 1931. The film was reviewed in the major British film trade papers, with the *Kinematograph Weekly* and the *Bioscope* delivering sourly critical verdicts. According to the *Kinematograph Weekly* the production had ‘no artistic merit’, and the scenes of Satz pursuing a young woman whilst disguised as an old man were considered ‘foreign to the average person’s conception of good taste’.⁶⁰ The *Bioscope*’s reviewer similarly believed such imagery would ‘fill most people with appalling nausea’, and added that the ‘ending comes rather as a relief’.⁶¹ Although what was felt to be off-colour humour was clearly a problem for both papers, the key difficulty with the film was its cultural specificity. Ostensibly due to the use of Yiddish, the piece was deemed ‘entirely unintelligible to the ordinary cinema public’, making its appeal ‘limited strictly to Jewish audiences’.⁶² Thus, even if further reviews of Yiddish films in the *Kinematograph Weekly* did not deploy the harsh criticism meted out to *His Wife’s Lover*, all were similarly judged of little interest to non-Jews. Indeed, despite *Yiddle With His Fiddle* being summed up as ‘story pleasing, acting good, treatment artistic’, it was

seen as a sensible booking only for 'specialised halls'.⁶³ In total, five Yiddish films shown in London were given trade screenings (*His Wife's Lover*, *The Voice of Israel*, *Yiddle With His Fiddle*, *Uncle Moses*, *Mamele*). Presumably distributors believed the potential box-office revenue generated by 'specialist halls' made such an event worthwhile.

In my further examination of something called the London Yiddish Cinema I want to consider the spaces and the geography in which Yiddish films were shown. In order to think about how Yiddish film was meaningful for its audience, it is necessary to remember that Yiddish-language cinema was not merely a projection of light onto a canvas screen but had a reality in the material spaces of London. Unfortunately it is now no longer practicable to solicit any kind of extensive oral history from those who attended the interwar screenings of Yiddish film in London. The majority of films were shown in the early 1930s, and the plain fact of temporal distance has made it impossible to obtain first-hand testimony from anyone who was much beyond the age of fifteen during the initial exhibition cycles. However, by looking at factors such as cinema architecture, audience behaviour, extracinematic attractions and the discourses surrounding the filmic representation of Jews, it is possible to 'thicken' our description of a London Jewish spectatorship by adding cultural context. This will, of course, not offer a total reconstruction of 1930s cinemagoing. However, it does suggest the kind of elements that might act as an influence on reception.

In recent years certain areas of film scholarship have harked back to Siegfried Kracauer's 1927 'Cult of distraction' essay and sought to look at how the space of exhibition might play a role in determining audience response.⁶⁴ Miriam Hansen, for example, has asserted that cinema location may well have influenced filmic consumption, countering the individualizing address of classical narrative cinema. During the silent era in the cinemas of immigrant neighbourhoods, she suggests, 'working class norms of conviviality and expressivity persisted'.⁶⁵ Through behaviours such as shouting at the onscreen characters, the viewing of films was experienced as a collective practice, providing conditions for an alternative public sphere. Certainly it would appear from empirical data collected by Annette Kuhn in her study of cinemagoing in 1930s Britain that the location and architecture of the film theatre was an important element in the experience of spectatorship. Of one participant it is remarked that 'his memory of exteriors is especially vivid'.⁶⁶ Similarly, in her analysis of responses to a survey that formed part of the same project, it is noted that 'in making the choice of which film to go and see, the place – the particular cinema – figured more importantly for many than what was actually showing there'.⁶⁷

Cinemas were rarely just cinemas in the Jewish East End of the 1930s, and the spaces in which Yiddish films were exhibited fulfilled a variety of functions. Prior to its destruction by the Luftwaffe in 1941, the Rivoli cinema in Whitechapel High Street was one of the leading picture houses

64 See Siegfried Kracauer, 'Cult of distraction', *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995).

65 Hansen, *Babel and Babylon*, p. 95.

66 Annette Kuhn, 'Memories of cinemagoing in the 1930s', *Journal of Popular British Cinema*, no. 2 (1999), pp. 101–19, p. 101.

67 Annette Kuhn, 'Cinemagoing in Britain in the 1930s: report of a questionnaire survey', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, vol. 19, no. 4, (1999), pp. 531–43, p. 535.

Fig. 4.
Rivoli Cinema, 1922. Image
reproduced courtesy of Tower
Hamlets Local History Library.



of East London. Its facade is revealed as a rather grand neoclassical affair, complete with arched doorways and ionic columns (figure 4). Yet in addition to screening films the auditorium was used for all manner of other events. ‘Tony’ – one of my interviewees – remembers *Rosh Hashanah* services taking place there in the 1930s in order to cater for the large congregation that the small local synagogue could not accommodate. The episode is mentioned in a short notice in the *Jewish Chronicle* that states the Welfare Committee of the United Synagogue would be organizing the event.⁶⁸ A rather different, but for some perhaps equally noteworthy, function took place at the Rivoli the following year when Harry Mizler – ‘East London’s boxing idol’⁶⁹ – visited the cinema to judge a competition. Hugely popular with Jews, Mizler wore a Star of David on his shorts when in the ring, and an article in the *Jewish Chronicle* notes that he received ‘an enthusiastic welcome’.⁷⁰

Yiddish films were also often exhibited in spaces related to the Yiddish theatre. Prager, we will remember, records two Yiddish silent movies – *Der Yid/The Jew* and *Der Meshiekh/The Messiah* – being shown at the Paliseum cinema in May 1914. A dramatic Byzantine structure complete with cupola and minarets, the Paliseum was originally built to house the Fienman Yiddish People’s Theatre but poorly managed finances forced it to close its doors in 1912. Similarly, the first Yiddish ‘talkies’ to be exhibited in the UK were shown in 1931 in the Pavilion Theatre (figure 5). Recognized as a landmark in the East End, the entrance to this Victorian theatre faced directly onto Whitechapel High Road (almost opposite the Rivoli), one of the area’s busiest thoroughfares. Equipped with complex stage machinery and with a seating capacity of over 2500, concerts, political meetings and boxing matches of note were all staged at

⁶⁸ See *Jewish Chronicle*, 14 September 1934, p. 42.

⁶⁹ *Jewish Chronicle*, 6 December 1935, p. 46.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

Fig. 5.
Pavilion Theatre, 1920s. Image
reproduced courtesy of Tower
Hamlets Local History Library.



the Pavilion Theatre. Between 1906 and 1934 there were also regular seasons of Yiddish theatre. Indeed, with such luminaries of the Yiddish stage as the tragedian Joseph Kessler directing operations, it was probably western Europe's prime venue for Yiddish theatre during the 1920s and early 1930s.

Yiddish theatre audiences were often thought of as notoriously rowdy. Hoberman notes that in Europe Yiddish theatregoers comprised 'the young and the modern . . . the new Jewish proletariat . . . traditional Jews kept away and prohibited their children from attending'.⁷¹ The historian David Mazower has recorded some of the reasons for this notoriety, conducting interviews with those who attended, or were involved in, performances at the Pavilion. The daughter of the Yiddish actor Joseph Fineberg tells of 'anything they . . . [the audience] . . . didn't like they'd shout out. When he [Fineberg] was cursing on stage, they'd shout out, "Joe, *shoin genig* [enough already]. Enough! Enough!"'⁷² Jewish cinema audiences were apparently equally unrestrained. In his biography charting a childhood in interwar Stepney, *East End My Cradle*, the Jewish author Willy Goldman recounts an afternoon in the cinema: 'In the half hour preceding a show they turned the place into a circus. They stood up and shouted jests to each other. Some sought out relatives and friends and when they caught sight of them screeched across: "Hey Becky! . . . Here's a seat I saved for you – come on over!"'⁷³ Once the programme is underway, 'the noise does not so much quieten down as change its character'. Some in the audience whistle along to a theme tune whilst others shout out jokes at a moment of high drama, 'and underlying these intermittent noises the incessant crackling of peanuts and the squelch of sucked oranges makes a "theme-tune" of its own'.⁷⁴ Such a scene is reminiscent of the scenario recounted to me by 'Frances', an interviewee. Presumably due to poor language skills, elderly immigrant

⁷¹ Hoberman, *Bridge of Light*, p. 17.

⁷² Quoted in David Mazower, *Yiddish Theatre in London*, 2nd edn (London: The Jewish Museum, 1996), p. 24.

⁷³ Willy Goldman, *East End My Cradle* (London: Faber and Faber, 1940), p. 139.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

Jews would request younger cinema patrons to read aloud the English intertitles that accompanied a silent film. As she said: 'sometimes all you could hear was people reading out, helping these old ones with the film'.

It is important to note that intertextual foreknowledge was a key component of many Jewish cultural activities. As told by Pavilion audience regular Louis Behr to David Mazower, during a performance of a Yiddish play, 'everyone practically you sat with could tell you the cast inside out, instant. If an actor forgot a line or two, the prompter wasn't necessary really. The gallery could answer word by word exactly.'⁷⁵ One should remember that in many ways Yiddish theatre and Yiddish cinema had many similarities in their composition. Specific narratives were played out on both stage and screen. These may have originated in Yiddish literary fiction – such as in the novels of Shalom Aleichem – or may have been one of the many popular plays that were first performed theatrically and went on to be adapted for the screen. Even in those Yiddish feature films that were the product of an original script, familiar themes are endlessly replayed. Indeed, it is hard to think of a Yiddish film in which intergenerational conflict or the torments of unrequited love do not surface as a central element. In addition, performers moved between theatrical and cinematic productions, and the stars of both were the same.

Taking on the status of a cultural event, it was not uncommon for the screening of a Yiddish film to include some sort of attraction in addition to the main feature. As mentioned earlier, the Mayor of Stepney attended the exhibition of the first Yiddish talking films in 1931 and delivered a speech. However, it was also the case that the screening of a Yiddish film might offer a culturally specific entertainment as part of the scheduled programme. Included in an advertisement for *The Eternal Wanderer's* 1935 screening at the Mile End Empire is the information that a stage show would feature the popular Dutch Yiddish singer 'Leo Fuld singing Jewish Melodies [sic] with Jack Goldy and Sidney May'.⁷⁶ Screened with *Uncle Moses* during its 1933 run at Whitechapel's Pavilion Theatre was the Flanagan and Allen short *The Bailiffs* (Frank Cadman, 1932) – Bud Flanagan was Jewish and a local boy. Born Chaim Reuben Weintrop in 1896, he grew up in the Spitalfields area of the East End and carried a significant Jewish fan-base throughout his career.

Given these various factors, it does not seem unreasonable to consider the Yiddish cinema in the East End as a communal institution. As Hansen has noted, immigrant neighbourhoods contained a host of formal and informal public spaces in which a distinct cultural life could be played out. Ranging from social clubs and political groups to entertainment spaces and cafes, 'such institutions constituted a local, separate, and relatively autonomous sphere which, although not overtly oppositional, still presented an alternative to dominant social norms'.⁷⁷ By thinking about Yiddish film in the East End in relation to the space of exhibition, it is my assertion that its situation in a web of cultural

⁷⁵ Quoted in Mazower, *Yiddish Theatre in London*, p. 23.

⁷⁶ See *Jewish Chronicle*, 20 March 1935, p. 52.

⁷⁷ Hansen, *Babel and Babylon*, p. 103.

activities is brought to the fore. It is not an image of highly differentiated social spaces that one sees but a generalized Jewish social realm, a scene. The same locations were used for an assortment of culturally specific purposes coding the space as 'Jewish'. Furthermore, across different events, behaviours that might create an atmosphere of informal communality dominated. The life of the Pavilion or the Rivoli was that of home ground; the audience was in a place where it could 'be itself'.

Of course Yiddish films were not only screened in East End cinemas. The majority of Yiddish-language talkies were also shown in the West End of London. Indeed, following the standard model of British film distribution, many Yiddish films began their exhibition cycle in central London and then went on to suburban screens. In her book *An Everyday Magic*, Kuhn notes the significance of topography for 1930s cinemagoers and how distinctions were made between those cinemas accessible by foot and those that required a trip on a bus or tram to the city centre.⁷⁸ For many Jews the East End constituted 'the local' – a notion clearly underscored by my interviewee 'Tony' when he said 'Stepney was all we knew, you see . . . it was our world'. To see a film in the West End was thus a somewhat different experience to an East End screening. It required leaving one's 'world' behind for the evening and engaging in a different set of cultural relations.

A discursive distinction between the city centre spaces and local spaces of cinemagoing apparently stretches back to the era of the nickelodeon. Hansen quotes Mary Heaton Vorse, 'a Greenwich Village radical', as noting that in 1911 'in the Bowery you get a different kind of audience. None of your neighbourhood spirit here.'⁷⁹ Heaton Vorse goes on to remark that in contrast to the Jewish or Italian areas of New York 'the audience seems chance met'.⁸⁰ Although she seems to favour the conviviality of local cinemas, many of those she exoticizes in their ethnic particularity rather enjoyed the cosmopolitan atmosphere of a gathering of strangers. Whilst for Jewish East Enders a trip to a West End cinema necessitated a move into a position of minority, this did not mean that one entered social marginalization. On the contrary, as Hansen notes, the cinema was involved in a kind of technology of social homogenization. To appeal to the radically diverse audiences of the ever-expanding metropolis, the cinema had to offer something that transcended difference. This was done through the 'creation of a larger mass-cultural audience that submerged all social distinctions under the banner of middle class values and respectability'.⁸¹ Certainly participation required different standards of behaviour and personal presentation – one interviewee, 'Charlie', remembered getting 'dressed up' before going to see a film 'in town' – but it emphatically did not mean one would feel an outsider.

Exactly how it felt for East End Jews to travel into the West End and watch a Yiddish film on its first run in the 1930s is now impossible to know. What can be determined, however, is that the Jewish press was

⁷⁸ See Kuhn, *An Everyday Magic*, p. 17.

⁷⁹ Quoted in Hansen, *Babel and Babylon*, p. 104.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

very keen for Yiddish cinema to carry a ‘message’ out to gentile audiences, and that the culturally exclusive nature of East End screenings would mean that this task required a different, more cosmopolitan, space. Approvingly citing an article published in the national newspaper *The Observer*, the *Jewish Chronicle* ran an article entitled ‘Judaism on the screen’ in 1934. A key quote stated ‘the Jews are at last using their own medium as a racial manifesto to the world – turning the art with which they have served so long into a plea for tolerance’.⁸² Whilst this particular piece referred to two British-made films, the trope of ‘film as manifesto’ – whether in the service of positive representations of Jews or as anti-Nazi ‘propaganda’ – was mobilized repeatedly with the release of several Yiddish films. Indeed, when *His Wife’s Lover* was exhibited at the Windmill Theatre, the *Jewish Times* regretted that ‘the nice Jewish talkie film does not have a specifically Jewish character . . . and therefore it is not big news for English viewers’.⁸³

With the screening of *Yiddle With His Fiddle* in 1937 this discourse reached its apogee. In a series of articles the film was advanced as a kind of vanguard manoeuvre in the placing of Jewish publicity in the realm of a generalized English publicity. Implicit in the articles’ logic was a belief that Jewish difference might be legitimated through acknowledgement. In an article on the film in the *Jewish Chronicle*, much was made of the potential for a kind of universal identification with the characters and their situations. It is a film, readers are told, that ‘manages to arouse a greater sympathy for the Jew by showing him as an ordinary human being, liable to the same humorous and tragic misfortunes as any other human being’.⁸⁴ This factor, however, is not simply of importance in itself, rather its value exists in relation to the high profile the film had achieved. Central to the discourse produced in relation to *Yiddle With His Fiddle* was discussion of its popularity with a broad range of cinemagoers, and its extensive discursive and material visibility. The above quote is taken from a piece headed ‘Success of “Yiddle With His Fiddle”, appreciative audiences’; the thrust of the article being the film’s long run at the Academy and the expressions of appreciation given to the cinema’s manager by ‘many people, Jewish and non-Jewish’.

In the *Jewish Times* the film’s high profile and enthusiastic reception were also seized upon. Through a series of over a dozen articles published across five months, a kind of template for describing the film was created in which the film’s popularity and its widespread public recognition were inevitably referenced. In addition to one-off statements such as the gushing ‘everyone who sees the film becomes inspired’,⁸⁵ certain phrases were repeated ad infinitum. Implying broad critical approval, ‘shown to great acclaim’⁸⁶ quickly became a cliché in these pieces. ‘Screening to full houses’⁸⁷ was a common way to point to movie’s popularity, though given the its long exclusive run at the cosmopolitan West End arthouse Academy cinema it could additionally suggest a recognition and enjoyment of the film by an audience with a

⁸² *Jewish Chronicle*, 13 January 1934, p. 40.

⁸³ *Jewish Times*, 8 December 1931, p. 2.

⁸⁴ *Jewish Chronicle*, 20 August 1937, p. 34.

⁸⁵ *Jewish Times*, 5 August 1937, p. 3.

⁸⁶ *Jewish Times*, 23 July 1937, p. 3.

⁸⁷ *Jewish Times*, 17 August 1937, p. 3.

88 *Jewish Times*, 5 August 1937, p. 3.

89 *Jewish Times*, 26 August 1937, p. 3.

90 *Jewish Times*, 8 September 1937, p. 3.

91 *Jewish Times*, 23 July 1937, p. 4.

92 *Jewish Chronicle*, 23 July 1937, p. 48.

93 *Jewish Times*, 21 July 1937, p. 3.

94 *Jewish Times*, 12 August 1937, p. 3.

95 *The Star*, 21 July 1937, p. 7.

96 *Evening Standard*, 24 July 1937, p. 9.

97 Nancy Fraser, 'Rethinking the public sphere: a contribution to the critique of actually existing democracy', in Craig Calhoun (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), p. 126.

diverse range of ethnic and class backgrounds. And imparting a sense of the film as a public event of some cultural importance was the often stated 'don't miss the chance to go and see *Yiddle With His Fiddle*'.⁸⁸

Included in these articles were a variety of facts or incidents that would exemplify or highlight assertions of the popularity and visibility of the piece. Both the *Jewish Chronicle* and *Jewish Times* reported on visits to the film by the 'greatest personalities',⁸⁹ including special reference to the then Liberal MP for Ely, James De Rothschild. The popularity of the film was also discussed in relation to the apparently objective measure of ticket sales. Presumably quoting publicity material, the *Jewish Times* ran an article specifically to report the significant box-office returns during the film's run at the Academy. In addition to noting that 'many people have seen the film many times', it stated that 'by now the film has been seen by 80,000 Jews and 10,000 non Jews'.⁹⁰ Exactly how such figures were arrived at – especially in relation to the calculation of ethnic breakdown – is not explained. There was also discussion of the film's coverage by non-Jewish mainstream newspapers. One article, entitled 'The English press about Molly Picon's film', was devoted to the simple fact that the film had been discussed 'with great interest in the English press'.⁹¹

Discussion of the aesthetic qualities of the film in Jewish newspapers might be contextualized by contemporary reflective conceptions of a discrete sphere of Jewish publicity, and its relationship with a more dominant English public sphere. On several occasions the film's technical accomplishments are praised. The *Jewish Chronicle* referred to the 'fine camerawork ... excellent acting' and 'delightful' direction of the piece.⁹² Likewise, the *Jewish Times* believed that whilst past Yiddish film productions had not looked to the 'rich equipment ... of ... Hollywood technique', this had now changed.⁹³ In contrast to previous amateurishness, the paper asserts that director 'Joseph Green went with serious responsibility to his task', an approach that had resulted in a film 'worthy of Rene-Clair's artistry'.⁹⁴ Such a paean was not, however, sung in the English press. Compared to 'the early Viennese talkies' in *The Star*,⁹⁵ and considered to have 'an amateur feeling about it' by the *Evening Standard*,⁹⁶ the film's production values were not something that caught the eye of British critics. In fact, although a couple of scenes are well constructed – in particular a wedding scene – the majority of the film is merely an adequate display of classical narrative cinema techniques.

Writing on the conditions required for participation in public discourse, the political theorist Nancy Fraser notes the tendency for dominant spheres to 'privilege the expressive norms of one cultural group over others and thereby make discursive assimilation a condition for participation in public debate'.⁹⁷ To talk *with* those in hegemonic ascendancy, one must talk *as* those in hegemonic ascendancy. Perhaps then, the obvious pleasure taken in the stylistic elements of *Yiddle With His Fiddle* by Jewish reviewers was not so much a delight in

groundbreaking aesthetics – the film was not conceived as taking cinematic form in new directions – but instead stemmed from the fact that Yiddish film producers were covering the same ground as mainstream cinema: the groundbreaking aesthetic of *Yiddle With His Fiddle* was in its mirroring of those filmic techniques that had become the established standard. One major payoff of such a development would be the ability to enter into a realm of English social life from which many Jews – particularly those of first- or second-generation immigrant status – were structurally excluded. To be represented as one wishes to be, within a space in which it is imagined mass opinion is constructed, contains a promise of recognition, the power of which should not be underestimated.

In the 1930s heyday of Yiddish cinema, Jewish audiences gathered across the globe. For those that attended a film screening in London it would appear to have had some cultural importance. Such an event became a possibility through the long-established figure of a self-recognized Jewish cinemagoer. He or she was brought into being through a range of production, distribution and publicity strategies, and the success of this endeavour can be gauged in the multiplicity of cinematic events on the Jewish cultural calendar. Throughout the 1930s Yiddish films were screened in both the East and West Ends of London. Between these two signature spaces of exhibition, Yiddish cinema acquired a public identity. In the East, the ‘counter’ or ‘alternative’ public sphere seems a good way to characterize the practices of identity construction and reinforcement of social unity that might take place. In the cosmopolitan West End, the Yiddish cinema can be understood as entering a more general mass-public. Here, it was possible to imagine a diverse audience of strangers might come together in that most democratic of spaces – the cinema auditorium – and enjoy a film in Yiddish.

Any serious cultural history of the Jewish diaspora must consider the forms of life that immigrant Jews brought into being in the great cities of the modern era. In writing about the screening of Yiddish film in London from the perspective of exhibition and reception, my intention is to add to this sum of knowledge by putting on record the previously unrecognized place of cinema in the lives of the prewar capital’s 200,000 Jewish inhabitants. It has sometimes been the case that those portraying the Jewish East End have invoked an orientalist language to conjure up their visions. An image of fog-filled labyrinthine alleys, hidden synagogues populated by Hassidic dreamers, and even roaming inner-city ‘golems’ may be enticing, but it obscures the distinctly modern historical consciousness of those Jews that were dealing with the day-to-day realities of living as a minority in interwar London. By reassembling the context of Yiddish film consumption, I hope to have illustrated the very concrete ways in which cinema both helped audiences to cope with those realities, and was understood through the conceptual structures of a wholly modern social imaginary.

Fig. 6.
Tabular illustration of date and
place of London Yiddish film
exhibition.

Yiddish films screened in London 1931–40		
Year	Film title (Titles in bold screened in multiple locations)	Name and location of cinema (WE = West End, EE = East End, O = Other)
1931	<i>Natascha</i>	Pavilion Theatre (Whitechapel High Rd, EE)
	<i>The Jewish Melody</i>	
	<i>Eternal Fools</i>	
	<i>Style and Class</i>	
	<i>His People</i>	
	<i>Oy! Doctor</i>	Scala Cinema (Charlotte St, WE)
	<i>Oy! Doctor</i>	
	<i>My Yiddishe Mama</i>	
	<i>Land of Freedom</i>	
	<i>The Jewish Gypsy</i>	
	<i>Kol Nidre</i>	
	<i>His Wife's Lover</i>	
1933	<i>The Voice of Israel</i>	Windmill Theatre (nr Piccadilly Circus, WE)
		Cinema House (Oxford Circus, WE)
	<i>Uncle Moses</i>	Rivoli Cinema (Whitechapel High Rd, EE)
	<i>Bar Mitzvah</i>	Pavilion Theatre (Whitechapel High Rd, EE)
1935	<i>The Eternal Wanderer</i>	Mile End Empire (Mile End Rd, EE)
		Forum Cinema (Villiers St, WE)
1937	<i>Yiddle With His Fiddle</i>	Mile End Empire (Mile End Rd, EE)
		Academy Cinema (Oxford St, WE)
		Rivoli Cinema (Whitechapel High Rd, EE)
		Mayfair Cinema (Brick Lane, EE)
		Smart's Picture House (Bethnal Green Rd, EE)
		Popular Cinema (Commercial Rd, EE)
		Queen's Cinema (Cricklewood, O)
		Stamford Hill Super Cinema (Stamford Hill, O)
		Ambassadors Cinema (Stoke Newington, O)
		Academy Cinema (Oxford St, WE)
1938	<i>Uncle Moses</i>	Rivoli Cinema (Whitechapel High Rd, EE)
	<i>The Eternal Wanderer</i>	Phoenix Theatre (Charing Cross Rd, WE)
1940	<i>Mamela</i>	Academy Cinema (Oxford St, WE)

'For this relief much thanks.'

Taxation, film policy and the UK government

MAGGIE MAGOR and PHILIP SCHLESINGER

This essay examines recent changes to the tax relief system for film production in the UK. To date, scant attention has been paid to the complex politics underlying and affecting the implementation of film policy. Nor has the role of different actors pursuing competing interests in the policy process received the scholarly attention it merits. Aside from anatomizing these aspects of film policy, our analysis, therefore, also has a methodological purpose. In addition to interrogating a range of documentary evidence, we have gone behind the scenes to interview key players involved in influencing and making policy. This sociological approach adds explanatory richness to film studies. It is important to underline the fact that behind policy as a *product* there is policy as a *process* – a recognition that points us to another level of explanation for outcomes that are publicly known and debated. It is striking, however, that in ostensibly democratic political cultures, very few know and understand the background strategies inherent in the policy process. This is especially so for of film policy as compared, say, with broadcasting policy. That is because film policy generally receives little sustained public attention. It is, moreover, a sporadic object of major policy intervention, unlike broadcasting. And it is much more arcane: the consultations are few, and highly limited in whom they invite into the discussion, as may be seen from what follows.

Fiscal incentives for film production in the form of tax relief – the subject of this essay – are a relatively recent feature of British film policy. This form of subsidy is given to particular industries when

‘market failure’ means that ‘sustainability’ without support is impossible. Once set up, therefore, film tax incentives are a mechanism for delivering subsidies to an industry without the direct intervention of government officials. The Conservatives were the first government to introduce this kind of support, in 1992 when they brought in Section 42 of the Finance (No. 2) Act. New Labour introduced a second tax incentive, Section 48 of the Finance (No. 2) Act, when they entered office in 1997. This dual-clause tax structure was in place until 2004 when it was reviewed and overhauled, in part to counter alleged abuses of the system. The legislation detailing the new Film Tax Credit (FTC) to replace Sections 42 and 48 was eventually contained in the 2006 Finance Bill and the Finance Act of the same year.

We shall first sketch the history of government intervention in British film policy leading up to the recent tax relief incentives, noting the various forms of state aid provided to the industry. Our account highlights both change and continuity in film policy, illustrating how governments of different political persuasions have addressed the question of state aid for film from the twentieth century into the twenty-first. We argue that UK film policy exhibits continuity in its governing assumptions. First, there is a longstanding emphasis on the importance of safeguarding national identity through maintaining a film industry. Second, this is coupled with a recurrent need to invent new forms of economic intervention as older ones are deemed to have failed. If the wheel is not being reinvented, it is certainly being regularly refurbished. These two key elements – cultural nationalism and economic intervention – are at the heart of the UK government’s present ‘creative economy’ policy.¹ It is too little recognized that film policy, historically, has provided one of the templates for New Labour’s decade-long attempt to steer the creative industries towards global competitiveness. However, film remains a special case, as it has not been the UK government’s creative economy policy to intervene in any other industrial sector using fiscal measures.

Against this backdrop we analyze a key aspect of New Labour film policy, namely the review of fiscal incentives and the implementation of the new FTC in 2006. The FTC is a policy shared between HM Treasury and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). The Treasury, which controls government expenditure and taxation, formulates fiscal policy. It was the Corporation Taxation Team in the Treasury that devised the new FTC. However, UK film policy falls mainly under the remit of the DCMS, which consulted with the Treasury over how the FTC was to be formulated. As a small and relatively weak ministry, the extent of the DCMS’s influence in fiscal film policy is a moot point, although as we show later, the DCMS did devise the so-called cultural test, which articulates directly with fiscal measures and determines whether films qualify for tax incentives. In 2007, administration of the cultural test was passed on to the UK Film Council (UKFC), a non-departmental public body (NDPB) formed by the New

¹ DCMS, *Creative Britain: New Talents for the New Economy* (London: DCMS, 2008).

Labour government in 2000. The UKFC (originally called the Film Council) acts as the strategic body for film in Britain. The role of the UKFC in influencing the FTC is examined below.

The ‘sustainability’ of the British film industry is a current policy goal. What this actually means in policy terms is one of the themes of this essay. A policy of sustainability is presently being pursued within a field of competing interests. In line with our sociological approach, we argue that it is essential to understand the interplay of these forces in order to grasp how current policy positions are shaped. At a global level, two key vectors need to be taken into account. On the one hand, there is the longstanding need to provide a system sufficiently attractive for the major US studios to make big-budget films in the UK.² At the same time, however, it is also necessary to meet the requirements of the European Commission, for which ‘indigenous’ production conducted within the rules of the European Union’s Single Market remains a policy priority. To elucidate the processes at work, our account therefore identifies crucial moments in recent film policy, highlights key actors involved in the policymaking process, and considers the role of the different governing parties, ministries and stakeholders at various stages of policy change.

John Hill has argued that film policy in the UK has a preeminently ‘protectionist’ cast in its concern with the preservation and support of commercial [British] film making’ in the face of Hollywood competition.³ Early types of state aid from the 1920s took the form of a quota system and cultural subsidies and were a response to the fear of US economic and cultural domination of the British film industry. The quota system – introduced by the 1927 Cinematograph Films Act – was the first UK government intervention, and the Act required renters (distributors) and exhibitors to acquire and show a certain percentage of British films.⁴ In 1936, the Moyne Committee was set up to ‘consider the position of British films’. The Committee recommended that the quota system be extended, although it noted the trend towards producing ‘quota quickies’ and a quality test was suggested to ensure that British films registered for the quota were of a high standard. American distributors’ screening of low-quality, cheaply produced British films was seen as being against ‘the spirit of the [Cinematograph Films] Act’, which was intended to support a struggling indigenous film industry.⁵ Moreover, some Hollywood studios had early recognized the strategic importance of Britain in the global film market. Setting up UK subsidiaries, companies such as Paramount and MGM could employ British citizens and thus meet the demands of the quota system.⁶

During the late 1940s, following the end of World War II, the British film industry fell into crisis through lack of film finance and high postwar production costs. Despite the quota system, fewer British films were being made for exhibitors to screen. Hollywood’s continued domination was a key concern across Europe, so much so that after the war more

2 The six major US studios are Fox Entertainment Group, Paramount Motion Pictures Group, Sony Pictures Entertainment, NBC Universal, Time Warner and Buena Vista Motion Pictures Group.

3 John Hill, ‘UK film policy, cultural capital and social exclusion’, *Cultural Trends*, vol. 13, no. 2 (2004), p. 32.

4 Margaret Dickinson and Sarah Street, *Cinema and State: the Film Industry and the British Government 1927–84* (London: British Film Institute, 1985), pp. 1–2.

5 Moyne Committee Report, Cmnd 5320, 1936, p. 20, cited in Dickinson and Street, *Cinema and State*, p. 66.

6 Anne Jäckel, *European Film Industries* (London: British Film Institute, 2003), p. 6.

7 Ibid., p. 7.

8 Dickinson and Street, *Cinema and State*, p. 177.

9 The Eady Levy was named after the Treasury official Sir Wilfrid Eady, who introduced the measure.

10 Dickinson and Street, *Cinema and State*, p. 225.

11 Bill Baillieu and John Goodchild, *The British Film Business* (London: John Wiley, 2002), p. 70; Jäckel, *European Film Industries*, p. 7.

12 Baillieu and Goodchild, *The British Film Business*, pp. 84, 89.

measures were put in place in many countries to further protect indigenous industries from US imports.⁷ The Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) formed the Motion Picture Export Association (MPEA, later the MPA) to lobby on behalf of the Hollywood majors in response to these restrictions. Yet, in the face of this exclusion, the strategic importance of Britain to the US studios increased, due in part to a shared language but also to the size and accessibility of its film market. Moreover, as a principal ally, Britain had influence in Europe, an important factor in pending general trade agreements on film.⁸ In April 1949, the National Film Finance Corporation (NFFC) was set up under the Cinematograph Film Production (Special Loans) Act to distribute loans for British film production.

With the quota system now firmly established (despite MPEA lobbying to abolish it) and the NFFC in place, the introduction of a trade subsidy in 1950 called the Eady Levy marked the end of a period of intense activity in UK film policy.⁹ The Eady Levy, a system proposed by Harold Wilson MP, then President of the Board of Trade, required exhibitors to retain a proportion of the ticket price and give half of this sum to fund British film production. The government sought to support indigenous film production with a scheme that would not be regarded as a subsidy. This approach was shaped by both external and internal factors. First, the scheme had to accord with the rules of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) regarding state aid for film. And second:

The Treasury was opposed to a subsidy paid out of box office receipts because of a general dislike of para-fiscal aids and an attachment to the principle that special taxes, like road tax, should be treated as a general revenue. There was also a danger that any form of subsidy would encourage other industries to clamour for similar favours.¹⁰

Initially introduced as a voluntary scheme, the Eady Levy became compulsory under the 1957 Cinematograph Films Act and was administered by the British Film Fund Agency (BFFA) set up in that year.

The film industry in Britain subsequently came under pressure due to the spread of television and the immense popularity of this new medium. The dominance of the US film industry also remained a global problem. During the 1950s, Hollywood majors, such as MGM, Columbia and Fox, continued to make films in Britain through their subsidiaries, as not only was technical talent cheaper but they could take advantage of the state incentives meant to help indigenous producers.¹¹ Into the 1960s, the major US studios continued to be the main investors in British film, and in 1967, ninety per cent of funding for 'British films' came from the USA, with investment peaking in 1968 at £31.3 million.¹² The structure of state support for film, comprising the Eady Levy, the NFFC and the quota system, remained in place and was renewed in successive Acts of Parliament in 1960, 1967 and 1970. However, with the USA in recession during the 1970s, the US studios withdrew and UK government interest

13 Prime Minister's Working Party report, Cmd 6372, HMSO, 1976, cited in BUFVC, *Film and Television in Education: the Handbook of the British Universities Film and Video Council*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 284–5.

14 *Film Policy* (London: Department of Trade, 1984), p. 12; cited in John Hill, 'British film policy', in Albert Moran (ed.), *Film Policy: International, National and Regional Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 103–4.

15 Hill, 'British film policy', pp. 103–4.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 103.

17 Dickinson and Street, *Cinema and State*, p. 241.

18 Hill, 'British film policy', p. 103.

19 Alan Stanbrook, 'When the lease runs out', *Sight and Sound*, vol. 53, no. 3 (1984), p. 173.

in the film industry was reignited. In August 1975, Harold Wilson, now Labour Prime Minister, set up a Working Group to report on 'the requirements of a viable and prosperous British film industry over the next decade'.¹³ *The Future of the British Film Industry* report was published in January 1976. Among its recommendations was the formation of a new British Film Authority, which would consolidate all the government's film-related activities and bring together the NFFC and BFFA.

A significant change in policy came in 1979 when the Conservatives entered office and Margaret Thatcher became Prime Minister. Over the course of its first five years in power, the new government set about removing economic support and thus transforming how cultural subsidies were distributed for film production. In 1981 the NFFC was restructured and its state funding dramatically reduced; in January 1983 the quota system was suspended; then in July 1984 the White Paper on *Film Policy* suggested scrapping the Eady Levy and the NFFC altogether to further rid the film industry of 'the paraphernalia of Government intervention'.¹⁴ These proposals were subsequently implemented in the 1985 Films Act along with the abolition of the Cinematograph Film Council (CFC) and the BFFA. The NFFC's assets were transferred to a private company, British Screen Finance Ltd, in which the private sector (initially Channel 4, Cannon and Rank) invested. Finally, in 1986, a fiscal measure which had made films eligible for one hundred per cent capital allowances in the first year, was phased out.¹⁵

As Hill has argued, the removal of economic support for film production 'was not simply destructive', as the effectiveness of the Eady Levy and the quota system had become increasingly questionable.¹⁶ The NFFC had long been regarded as an organization constrained by 'inadequate funding resources and . . . having to function strictly on commercial lines',¹⁷ although it provided an important lifeline for independent producers. Meanwhile, the value of the Eady Levy fund, determined by cinema admissions, had decreased with the decline in cinemagoing. As producers received a proportion of the fund in relation to the box-office success of a film, the fund tended to pay out to the more successful filmmakers rather than those most in need. Similarly, the quota system had never proved to be particularly effective. During the 1970s, when the number of registered 'British' films dropped by half, largely due to the withdrawal of the US studios from British film production, many cinemas failed to screen the required percentage of indigenous productions.¹⁸ Meanwhile, some argued that the phasing out of the hundred per cent capital allowances tax shelter encouraged 'those with gumption and ingenuity to [find] imaginative ways out of a desubsidised environment'.¹⁹

However, as economic subsidies for film were dismantled, no alternatives were proposed. It would seem that, taken in the round, economic measures did have an impact on output, as following their complete withdrawal film production went into decline and in 1989 only

20 Hill, 'British film policy', p. 109.

21 John Hill, 'Government policy and the British film industry 1979–90', *European Journal of Communication*, vol. 8, no. 2 (1993), p. 209.

22 The UK joined the Eurimages programme in 1992 only to withdraw in 1996. This was despite protests from British filmmakers. During 1994 and 1995, a third of British films had received support from the scheme. Jäckel, *European Film Industries*, p. 79.

23 The working groups also considered the structure of the industry and its impact on private investors, the setting up of a screen commission to promote Britain as a filmmaking location, and the setting up of an organization to market British films overseas. Jane Headland and Simon Relph, *The View From Downing Street*, UK Film Initiatives Series (London: British Film Institute, 1991), p. 1.

24 Michael Prescott, *The Need for Tax Incentives*, UK Film Initiatives Series (London: British Film Institute, 1991), pp. 4–5.

25 Hill, 'Government policy and the British film industry 1979–90', p. 220.

26 Wilf Stevenson, director of the BFI, was particularly involved in lobbying at this time.

27 Stephen Dorrell, MP, had published a document in 1995 called 'The British film industry', responding to the House of Commons National Heritage Committee recommendations of April 1995, which included the setting up of a film finance committee.

thirty films were produced in Britain.²⁰ The US studios had returned during the 1980s to make their own films but not to invest in British films. In 1986, £270.1 million was invested in British film production but this fell to £135.7 million in 1988 and declined further to £49.6 million in 1989,²¹ with filmmakers relying in the main on two key funding sources – British Screen and Channel 4. In June 1990, a seminar was held at Downing Street, chaired by Prime Minister Thatcher, to review the film industry and consider future issues. These included discussions on US inward investment and the promotion of British films abroad. The head of Universal Studios, Lew Wasserman, was invited, indicating the importance of Hollywood to any debates on the UK film industry. Moreover, the position of the industry in Europe was also considered, given the launch of pan-European initiatives. Eurimages (the Council of Europe's fund to support coproductions)²² began in 1988 and MEDIA I (the programme to stimulate growth and competition among Europe's audiovisual industries) in December 1990. The government subsequently set up working groups to discuss the key issues, one being the use of fiscal incentives for production investment.²³ In 1991, to stimulate wider debate, the British Film Institute (BFI) produced the 'UK Film Initiatives' series of pamphlets. This included Michael Prescott's *The Need for Tax Incentives*, which argued that fiscal support was essential, alongside other forms of state aid, to encourage investment in British film production and enable British filmmakers to compete on a 'level playing field' with other countries offering these incentives in Europe, Canada and Australia.²⁴

It has been argued that the momentum for change in British film policy slowed down when John Major replaced Margaret Thatcher as Conservative Prime Minister in 1991, reflecting uncertainties in the government about how best to proceed.²⁵ Nonetheless, the initiatives put in place by Major's administration during the 1990s had a far-reaching impact on film policy into the next century. In 1992 the Chancellor, Norman Lamont, introduced fiscal support for the film industry in the form of tax relief covered by a clause in the Finance (No. 2) Act. Section 42 was also referred to as 'large budget tax relief' and provided incentives for films with budgets in excess of £15 million. Also in 1992, the Department of National Heritage (DNH) was established, with responsibility for policy in culture and the arts, leisure, tourism and sport. Funding opportunities for the arts expanded with the new National Lottery established by Act of Parliament in 1993. Regional Arts Councils were in charge of allocating the Lottery money to film projects. The distribution of Lottery funds was initially confined to capital projects and it took intense lobbying from some to have film accepted as a capital asset.²⁶

However, lack of private investment in the British film industry was an enduring problem and in 1995 the Secretary of State for Heritage, Stephen Dorrell, MP, set up an advisory committee to explore the main obstacles to industry growth.²⁷ The Advisory Committee on Film

²⁸ Advisory Committee on Film Finance, *Report to the Secretary of State for National Heritage* (London: Department of National Heritage, 1996), p. 3.

²⁹ BSAC/PACT Industry Working Group on Fiscal Policy for Film, *Response to HM Treasury Consultation Paper on the Reform of Film Tax Incentives* (London: BSAC, 2005), p. 9.

Finance, led by the banker Sir Peter Middleton, was subsequently formed, with members from the worlds of finance and film. The committee reported in July 1996, pointing to structural problems in how the industry was organized, financial problems (including lack of expertise on film finance in the City) and an overall lack of communication between the industry and the City.²⁸ Meanwhile, the Arts Council of England (ACE) commissioned a report by Spectrum Strategy Consultants, published in May 1996. This explored the feasibility of film franchises ‘expressly designed to create vertically-integrated companies’ with a sustained level of output to encourage investment.²⁹ ACE subsequently invited bids for £96 million of National Lottery money to be distributed to three film franchises over a six-year period. These were awarded to The Film Consortium, Pathé Pictures and DNA Films, and the franchises were set up in May 1997, just after the election of the New Labour government.

The past two decades, therefore, have seen shifts in policy that have confirmed the perceived importance of film to the national economy – a view shared by both Conservative and Labour governments. During the 1980s the Conservatives removed all economic support from a film production sector already struggling through lack of state aid and private investment. However, support was reintroduced during the early 1990s through the fiscal system and Lottery funding. In May 1997, the very week that the film franchises were awarded, New Labour, led by Tony Blair, won the General Election. The DNH was quickly renamed the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the new government set about investigating the state of the British film industry. In 1998 the Treasury, under the new Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown, introduced Section 48 of the Finance (No. 2) Act – a second fiscal incentive, which applied to film productions with budgets below £15 million. In contrast to Section 42’s ‘big budget’ emphasis, aimed at attracting inward investment (mainly from the USA) to the UK, Section 48 was the ‘low-budget tax relief’, intended to help indigenous independent filmmakers.

The Film Policy Review Group (FPRG) was also set up in 1998 by the Labour government, to explore issues relating to British film and identify initiatives for future film policy. The FPRG was jointly chaired by Tom Clarke, Minister for Film and Tourism in the DCMS, and Stewart Till, President of International PolyGram Filmed Entertainment, whose appointment as co-chair reflected the special status that global trade and distributor interests were given in the review. The FPRG and its six subgroups comprised some fifty members who were predominantly film company executives.³⁰ Fiscal policy did not fall under the remit of any subgroup as it was now regarded as an issue for HM Treasury, whereas the Film Policy Review was a joint initiative between the DCMS and the UK film industry. Despite this, the FPRG’s Film Finance subgroup did make recommendations regarding fiscal issues, which were published in

³⁰ The six FPRG subgroups were: Film Finance; Achieving 20 Percent Market Share; Broadening the Audience; Inward Investment; Export; Training and Education.

- 31 Film Policy Review Group, *A Bigger Picture* (London: DCMS, 1998), p. 21. The members of the Film Finance subgroup were: Colin Leventhal (Hal Films, chair); Jonathan Davis (London Economics); Charles Denton (Arts Council of England); Michael Foster (Ginger Productions); Billy Hinshelwood (Marriott Harrison); Simon Perry (British Screen); David Potter (Guinness Mahon); Sawtantar Sharma (Stirling Cooke); Bob Watts (KPMG).
- 32 Film Policy Review Group, *A Bigger Picture*, pp. 22, 23.

- 33 BSAC, 'BSAC Interview Series: interview with Janet Anderson, MP' (London: BSAC, 2000), p. 1.

- 34 John Woodward, 'Covering letter from chief executive officer of the Film Council, John Woodward', *Film Council Annual Review 2000/01* (London: UK Film Council, 2001), p. 1.
- 35 Film Council, *Film Council Annual Review 2000/01*, p. 2.
- 36 Film Policy Review Group, *A Bigger Picture*, p. 50.
- 37 DCMS, *The Comprehensive Spending Review: a New Approach to Investment in Culture* (London: DCMS, 1998).
- 38 Chris Smith, *A New Cultural Framework* (London: DCMS, 1998).

the exercise's final report *A Bigger Picture*. There it was reported that 'the industry members of the Group agreed unanimously that this was one of the most important issues under review, and that the results of their discussions about the fiscal climate for film investment should be recorded', although it was conceded that the DCMS could not endorse their comments on this matter.³¹ The subgroup made a number of recommendations, including that the recently introduced Section 48 be extended beyond its current three-year time limit to encourage inward investment from the USA; that the beneficiaries of the tax incentive contribute to industry training; and that an additional tax incentive be introduced to encourage investment in the film business. Finally, the subgroup endorsed the earlier recommendation of the Middleton Committee to establish a Film Finance Forum to develop further tax relief systems and do the necessary economic modelling for these proposals.³²

The FPRG appears to have influenced policy outcomes. Although Janet Anderson, who replaced Tom Clarke as Minister for Tourism, Film and Broadcasting in 1998, questioned 'the ability of an "Action Committee" with as many as 40-50 people to act', she did identify key achievements of the FPRG: the setting up of a Skills Investment Fund, the opening of the British Film Office in Los Angeles and the establishment of the British Film Commission.³³ But in illustration of the difficulties in tracing the precise impact of such policy exercises, Anderson also credited the setting up of a new Film Finance Forum and the implementation of a new tax incentives structure to the FPRG, despite the fact that both of these 'achievements' had already been proposed and implemented before the review's work. Finally, Anderson also referred to the setting up of the 'long overdue Film Council', which was finally established in 2000. As we shall see, the next phase in the evolution of fiscal policy involved activity by a major new actor on the scene.

The establishment of the Film Council was regarded as a 'major shift in Government policy for film'³⁴ and was described by its first chair, Alan Parker, as 'the most radical shake-up of UK public film funding since 1985'.³⁵ Despite Anderson crediting the Film Council as an achievement of the FPRG, *A Bigger Picture* had only alluded to a potential new structure and had recommended a review of 'the machinery for providing government support to film'.³⁶ This intention was later developed in the DCMS publication *The Comprehensive Spending Review: a New Approach to Investment in Culture*³⁷ and consultation paper *A New Cultural Framework* by the first New Labour Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, Chris Smith.³⁸ These two publications stated the government's intention to set up a new strategic film body overseeing both industrial and cultural objectives, which at this point they called British Film. This agency would absorb the public and semipublic bodies in the UK concerned with film. Smith confirmed that the idea for the new

39 Ibid., p. 8.

40 Margaret Dickinson and Sylvia Harvey 'Public policy and public funding for film: some recent developments in the UK', *Screen*, vol. 46, no. 1 (2005), p. 89.

41 Interim Action Committee, *Proposals for Setting up a British Film Authority*, Cmnd 7071 (London: HMSO, 1978).

42 The Interim Action Committee published a further four reports on British film from 1979 to 1981: *The Financing of the British Film Industry* (1979); *Film Industry: Statistics, Technical Developments and Cable Television* (1980); *Film and Television Co-Production* (1981); *Distribution of Films for Exhibition in Cinema and By Other Means* (1981).

43 Film Policy Review Group, *A Bigger Picture*, p. 50.

44 BSAC, *A Response to Proposals for a Film Council issued by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport* (London: BSAC, 1998), p. 3.

45 Film Council, *Towards a Sustainable Film Industry* (London: Film Council, 2000), p. 7.

body had been overwhelmingly accepted during consultation, and the celebrated actor/director and former chairman of the BFI Richard Attenborough was asked to consult further with the film community in developing the shape and direction of the agency.³⁹

As Margaret Dickinson and Sylvia Harvey note, the proposal for a new Film Council was 'realizing an idea with a long history', as different funding structures for the UK film industry had been discussed since the 1940s.⁴⁰ Harold Wilson, in the mid 1970s, had proposed setting up a British Film Authority, and his Working Group led to the formation of the Interim Action Committee (IAC), which published *Proposals for the Setting up of a British Film Authority* in 1978.⁴¹ This proposal was quashed when the Conservatives entered office in 1979. However, the IAC did continue to meet, discuss and produce further reports on the film industry until April 1981.⁴² The IAC's industry representatives considered it to be a useful forum for discussion. The IAC subsequently mutated into the British Screen Advisory Council (BSAC), funded mainly by annual subscriptions from members across the film industry. When New Labour's FPRG published *A Bigger Picture* in 1998, the BSAC was named as one of the bodies to be consulted on the development of a new structure for film policy.⁴³ The BSAC responded positively to the DCMS's proposals as finally bringing about 'the fulfilment of Harold Wilson's original objectives'.⁴⁴ One source told us that the government then asked the BSAC if it wanted to become the Film Council. However, the BSAC had broadened its remit since its original formation in 1981, keeping up with changing technologies and the introduction of new media platforms, thereby evolving to represent a transforming audiovisual sector of which film was just a part.

The Film Council was finally launched on 2 May 2000 as a non-departmental public body, working at arm's length from government, with the status of a company limited by guarantee (the guarantee being the £1 provided by the DCMS). It absorbed a number of public and semipublic bodies in the UK concerned with film, including the Lottery Film Department of the Arts Council, British Screen Finance, the British Film Commission, and the production and regional funding roles of the BFI. All remaining activities in the BFI came under the Film Council's control. Although the BFI retained its formal autonomy, it now received its funding from the Film Council, which also appointed the chair of its board. The Film Council's annual budget was composed of a combination of Lottery funding (which it was designated to distribute) together with a grant-in-aid from the DCMS. At launch, the annual budget came to some £55 million, a total that would vary in line with the number of Lottery tickets sold.⁴⁵

The Film Council was set up to act as a conduit between government and the British film industry, as its chief executive John Woodward has made clear:

The Film Council sits smack in the middle between the Government and the industry, and *one of its key functions is to act as a kind of translator*. Our job is to explain the industry to the Government, because the Government ... knows relatively little about the film industry. ... And vice versa, the UK Film Council is there to explain the Government to the film industry, because the film industry cares relatively little about the Government as long as the money's coming in. ... I think that perhaps our mistake was not making it clearer from the start that the establishment of the UK Film Council did not now mean that the film industry had a direct line to Government, and that it would get everything it wanted. It was never going to be that way.⁴⁶

46 BSAC, 'BSAC Interview Series: interview with John Woodward' (London: BSAC, 2005), p. 5, our emphasis.

At first, the relationship between the Film Council and government was unclear to many of its key stakeholders, and the new body's strategic vision for film in Britain was also subject to criticism. It was formed to fuse industrial and cultural objectives, and the 2000 launch document *Towards a Sustainable Film Industry* proposed that it work both with the USA and Europe in developing UK film policy. As with the earlier FPRG, the first Film Council Board chiefly comprised business leaders and film industry players with a track record in Hollywood, including producers such as Tim Bevan and Duncan Kenworthy.⁴⁷ The producer Alan Parker was appointed as the first chair. Such key appointments were seen as fundamental in signalling and influencing the early direction of the Film Council and placing industrial objectives – and an orientation towards Hollywood – to the fore. Some have argued that this approach failed to consider that the British film industry might compete successfully against the US studios by building on its differences from Hollywood.⁴⁸ Instead, strategy appeared to be more about cooperating fully with the US industry to attract inward investment. This was evident from early Film Council initiatives such as the expansion of the British Film Commission and the setting up of the British Film Office in Los Angeles.

47 Nick James, 'In bed with the Film Council', *Sight and Sound*, no. 117 (2001), p. 16.

48 Dickinson and Harvey 'Public policy and public funding for film', p. 91.

The UK was not alone in its pursuit of US inward investment – other competition had come particularly from Canada and Australia since the early 1990s. Dickinson and Harvey have argued that the objective of obtaining tax credits for film has always been 'to enable the British industry to compete, not against Hollywood, but against potential rivals for Hollywood investment'.⁴⁹ The global film industry had become highly mobile, with US filmmakers seeking out a widening number of locations with competitive skills bases and production capacities. Moreover, the US studios would increasingly cost several different territories before deciding where to shoot a film, and consider a variety of factors, including local skills and services, exchange rates, language, culture and the tax incentives on offer. These points were emphasized in a BSAC report to the Film Council published in August 2000, in which the UK's fiscal arrangements were reviewed two years on from the introduction of Section 48. The BSAC argued that the UK's indigenous

49 Margaret Dickinson and Sylvia Harvey, 'Film policy in the United Kingdom: New Labour at the movies', *Political Quarterly*, vol. 76, no. 3 (2005), p. 427.

film sector was at risk without inward investment from the US studios. The report also noted that in the previous twelve months some structural changes had begun to emerge in the UK production sector as a result of the fiscal incentives. These included more upfront payments to production, direct equity investment in films, direct investment in production companies and more distribution deals.⁵⁰ In conclusion, the BSAC recommended to the Film Council that Section 48 be extended for a further two years beyond its existing expiry date in 2002.

The Film Council rapidly addressed the question of tax breaks. At its July 2000 Board meeting, only two months after being set up, the chair, Alan Parker, proposed to write to the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport stating that the current one hundred per cent relief should be extended until the Film Council had undertaken 'a comprehensive examination of the current and new incentives which would help achieve the government's objective of a sustainable British film industry', a decision unanimously agreed by the Board.⁵¹ The Film Council was subsequently asked by the government to prepare a paper stating the case for extending Section 48.⁵² In the March 2001 Budget, the Treasury announced its intention to extend tax relief on films until 2005. Prior to this announcement, executives at the Film Council had met Inland Revenue officials to discuss tax proposals. The Film Council had also invited producers to speak at Board meetings to illustrate their use of Section 48. A meeting was held with Jack Valenti, President of the MPAA, in advance of his own meeting with the Chancellor of the Exchequer.⁵³ Reflecting the easy access to 11 Downing Street that the MPAA evidently enjoyed, Valenti had told the Film Council that the Chancellor would be renewing Section 48 in the forthcoming budget. The extension was welcomed by the industry, although this success could hardly be attributed to the Film Council's influence.

Fiscal policy came further into focus in 2002. First, in the March Budget, when the Chancellor closed a loophole in Section 48 to restrict relief to films for theatrical release, thus preventing television programmes from qualifying. And next in November 2002, when the House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport (CMS) Select Committee invited responses to the provocative question, 'Is there a British film industry?' The call for evidence, *inter alia*, asked for views on the nature of support from government, the structure and performance of the film industry, and the performance and approach of the Film Council to date. The CMS Select Committee received over one hundred written responses and papers from a broad range of stakeholders.⁵⁴ From February 2003, a number of witnesses were invited to give oral evidence on these issues. Additionally, the Committee visited film production facilities in the UK (Ealing, Pinewood, Leavesden and Framestore CFC) and took a trip to Los Angeles in June 2003 where their programme consisted of meetings with all the major studio heads.⁵⁵

The committee's report, published on 18 September 2003, noted that witnesses from the UK and the USA were almost unanimous in their

⁵⁰ BSAC, *BSAC Review of Fiscal Incentives for the UK Film Industry*, submission to Film Council (London: BSAC, 2000), p. 2.

⁵¹ Film Council Board minutes, 25 July 2000, p. 4. The UKFC Board minutes referred to in this article were accessed at the BFI National Library, London.

⁵² Film Council Board minutes, 22 August 2000, p. 2.

⁵³ Film Council Board minutes, 27 February 2001, p. 3.

⁵⁴ The range of responses received included those from filmmakers (including Michael Kuhn, Tim Bevan, Alex Cox, Barnaby Thompson, Lord Attenborough and Martin Scorsese); broadcasters (the BBC, Channel 4, ITV Network and BskyB); and key organizations (such as Equity, PACT, Cinema Exhibitors' Association, BSAC, BECTU, BFI, MPA).

⁵⁵ The CMS Committee's LA programme comprised meetings with Warner Bros, 20th Century Fox, MGM, Walt Disney, Paramount, Sony Imageworks, HBO, Universal, Dreamworks and Columbia Tristar Motion Picture Group (Sony Pictures). They also met the MPAA, the Hollywood Heritage Museum and the American Film Marketing Association. Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee, *The British Film Industry: Sixth Report of Session 2002–03, Volume I* (London: The Stationery Office, 2003), p. 63.

56 Ibid., p. 31.

57 Ibid., p. 32.

58 Ibid., pp. 32, 33.

59 Ibid., pp. 34, 58.

60 The aim of this change was to reflect the geographical remit of the UKFC globally and to make its international image much clearer (UKFC, *Film Council, Three Years On: a Consultation on our Findings and Policy Priorities* (London: UK Film Council, 2003), p. 10–11). The British Film Commission was also renamed as UKFC International while the British Film Office was rebranded as the UK Film Council US.

61 UKFC Board minutes, 29 July 2003, p. 6.

support for tax incentives. However, the ‘historical cycle of change in the tax regime’ was said to be ‘a huge disadvantage’ in encouraging long-term investment and planning.⁵⁶ The BSAC and the Producers’ Alliance for Cinema and Television (PACT) had both argued that structural changes becoming apparent in the industry were largely due to fiscal incentives, and to maintain these predictability was required, as opposed to the current “‘boom and bust” seven year cycle’.⁵⁷ Meanwhile, the Hollywood studio heads had referred to growing competitiveness between filmmaking destinations, such as Canada, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand and the Czech Republic, noting that the UK’s current fiscal structure had ‘created a level playing field’, thereby bringing other criteria ‘such as facilities and talent’ to the fore in deciding where a film would be made.⁵⁸

Nevertheless, it was widely believed that Section 48 needed to be revised. The Film Council had outlined their ideas for a ‘son of 48’ that would tie in with distribution as well as production. BSAC had similarly promoted a distribution-led strategy in a study of potential new tax mechanisms submitted ‘in confidence’ to the DCMS. The CMS Committee called for clarity over fiscal policy and support from all the government departments with an interest in film to ‘end the current uncertainty plaguing the industry’.⁵⁹ The report had also acknowledged the work of the Film Council (renamed the UK Film Council [UKFC] in May 2003⁶⁰), which throughout the year had met officials at HM Treasury and the Inland Revenue to discuss priorities for a new tax relief. While a paper outlining these plans was now in place, the Treasury had reiterated to the UKFC the need for the industry to appear united behind the report’s principles ‘in order to command serious attention for its proposals’.⁶¹

On 10 February 2004, the Inland Revenue announced that it was closing a loophole with immediate effect to prevent tax avoidance schemes whereby tax partnerships were formed purely to claim ‘sideways loss relief’. Tax avoidance schemes such as this (also known as Generally Accepted Accounting Principles, or GAAP, schemes) had become increasingly commonplace since the introduction of Section 48 in 1997 and were used by producers to raise capital for film production. The practice was to encourage rich individuals to invest lump sums in film projects. Such investments were used by investors to reduce their tax liabilities. Investors would claim tax relief in return for making over lower sums to film producers. In contrast to the mid 1990s, when the Middleton Committee had reported on the lack of City expertise for filmmakers (a point reiterated in the FPRG’s *A Bigger Picture*), there was now an abundance of specialists in film finance able to help producers put together funding plans for their films. Such expertise included asset management companies such as Grosvenor Park and Ingenious Media, whose scheme ‘Inside Track’ was created in 2002 specifically for film

62 Patrick McKenna, 'Utilising fiscal incentives including sale and leaseback', *Skillset Film*. <http://www.skillset.org/film/knowledge/article_5098_1.asp> [accessed 22 August 2007].

63 Geoffrey Macnab, 'Break dancing', *Sight and Sound*, no. 157 (2004), p. 36.

64 In a House of Commons debate on 8 March 2004, Estelle Morris defended her ignorance of the government's intention, arguing that tax loopholes were usually closed without warning to prevent investors taking advantage and sheltering money. She claimed £100 million of taxpayers' money was saved by the Inland Revenue's action. 'Culture, Media and Sport: film industry', Hansard HC, vol. 418, part 551, col. 1229 (8 March 2004). The Inland Revenue's timing was later referred to as more 'a case of botched announcements and broken communication lines than of the tax authorities turning against film'. Macnab, 'Break dancing', p. 38.

65 Ian Youngs, 'Filmmaker tells of tax crisis', *BBC Online*, 23 February 2004. <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/3514221.stm>> [accessed 1 May 2009].

66 Macnab, 'Break dancing', p. 38.

67 UKFC Board minutes, 24 February 2004, p. 3.

68 UKFC Board minutes, 27 April 2004, p. 2.

69 Nigel Bunyan, 'Tax disaster puts British film industry in peril, says Malkovich', *Daily Telegraph*, 1 March 2004.

70 HM Treasury, *Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget Statement*, 17 March 2004. <http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/bud_bud04_index.htm> [accessed 1 May 2007].

investors, and guaranteed that even if a film made a loss, the investor would still receive a tax break under the GAAP scheme.⁶²

The Treasury's sudden decision to close this loophole was described in *Sight and Sound* as an 'almighty jolt' because it came with no prior warning to the industry.⁶³ It surprised producers, film financiers, the UK Film Council, and even the DCMS's Films Minister Estelle Morris.⁶⁴ The production of some forty films financed by the GAAP tax partnerships was immediately thrown into question, and high-profile productions put on hold included *The Libertine* (Laurence Dunmore, 2004), *Tulip Fever* and *The Constant Gardener* (Fernando Meirelles, 2005). Filmmakers spoke to the media expressing their despair at the closure of the loophole with no advance warning. Kate McCreery, producer of *The Houdini Girl*, which had lost forty per cent of its budget overnight, spoke to the BBC about the uncertainty now facing her production team, stating that:

You have to be confident – you have to think that there's a body like the [UK] Film Council that has to be able to sort something else out. Otherwise, what's the point of having it?⁶⁵

The UK Film Council lobbied furiously to protect the affected productions, though some thought this was 'with little noticeable effect'.⁶⁶ The board compiled a case for emergency funding for seventeen productions while acknowledging that the UKFC 'would certainly be blamed for not obtaining full transitional relief for all the films'.⁶⁷ The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, Tessa Jowell, wrote to Alan Parker in April 2004 explaining that the government could not provide any assistance to the films affected.⁶⁸ The BSAC had also attempted to negotiate with government at this time, lobbying unsuccessfully for 'grandfathering' (whereby films at a certain stage of production could continue under the scheme). Some producers were therefore moved to lobby the government directly. For example, John Malkovich, coproducer of *The Libertine*, was reported to have approached Hartlepool MP and former Industry Secretary Peter Mandelson, and Labour peer and former filmmaker Lord Puttnam,⁶⁹ before his production relocated to the Isle of Man.

Production plans were evidently still in limbo when the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, made his Budget statement on 17 March 2004. Confirming the closure of the tax partnership loophole, he also proposed a review of the Section 48 tax scheme with the aim of introducing a new tax relief measure that would transfer 'the available reliefs for British made films with budgets below £15 million from the third parties ... to pay reliefs directly to the film-makers themselves'.⁷⁰ Section 48 had been due to expire in July 2005, so this announcement came as little surprise. The clause had been subject to routine 'abuse' as financiers, lawyers and accountants had found loophole after loophole to exploit. Secondary legislation had been passed since 2000 to close loopholes, and for this reason Section 48 was losing political credibility.

The Treasury's intentions for fiscal film policy were confirmed at a reception held for film industry representatives at 11 Downing Street on 21 September 2004, hosted by Gordon Brown and the Paymaster-General, Dawn Primarolo. It was attended by leading filmmakers, including Alan Parker, Richard Attenborough, Tim Bevan, Andrew MacDonald and Barbara Broccoli. The new provisions would not take effect until after Section 48 had expired in July 2005. The announcement – ten months in advance – was intended to enable filmmakers to 'plan the finances of films in development with confidence about what the tax arrangements will be when those films are completed'.⁷¹

The Chancellor's December 2004 pre-Budget report ended what had proved to be an eventful year for fiscal film policy. As part of a package of measures intended to tackle tax fraud more generally, Brown announced the shutting down of further film tax-avoidance loopholes with immediate effect. In addition to preventing so-called 'sideways loss relief', this was also intended to prevent 'double dipping' (relief claimed more than once on any given film), and to stop companies converting tax deferrals into tax gains by exiting from film tax deferral arrangements.⁷² The need to return confidence and certainty quickly to a British film industry thrown into turmoil was also restated, with the government promising to complete a review of the fiscal structure for film by the end of January 2005.

It was clear that the Treasury was in control of steering the fiscal aspects of film policy. Although the UKFC had responded positively to the government's announcement about the new film tax relief in September 2004,⁷³ it did not react publicly to the pre-Budget news. Some saw the Film Council's lobbying credentials as damaged by the unpredictable nature of the policy announcements by the Treasury.⁷⁴ Meanwhile, the BSAC released a gloomy press notice predicting 'a dramatic collapse in film production over the next few months' due to the latest set of announcements, as US filmmakers would be unlikely to invest in the UK without a clear fiscal film structure.⁷⁵ This proved to be the case, as the value of UK spend from inward investment dropped from £729.54 million in 2003 to £548.49 million in 2004, with a further fall to £308.66 million in 2005.⁷⁶

In January 2005 Estelle Morris, Minister of State for the Arts, reconvened the Tax Strategy Working Group (TSWG), which included members from the UKFC, BSAC, PACT, DCMS and Inland Revenue. A smaller group called the Industry Working Group on Fiscal Policy for Film (also known as the Hoon Committee after its chair, Société Générale's Premila Hoon) was subsequently formed to speed up the review process. The Hoon Committee's thirteen members included representatives of the UK film industry as well as legal experts and City media consultancies.⁷⁷ This group's influence on policy was questionable, according to members interviewed for this research, as few of their recommendations were adopted. Arguably the Hoon Committee was formed to indicate that industry cohesion existed on policy required by HM Treasury.

71 HM Treasury, 'Treasury announces new tax relief for British films', press release, 21 September 2004.

72 HM Treasury, *Protecting Tax Revenues*, pre-Budget report, 2 December 2004.

73 UKFC, 'UK Film Council welcomes new tax credit for lower budget British films', press release, 21 September 2004.

74 Tim Adler, 'British film industry likely to be weakened by tax credit, says City law firm', *Screen Finance*, vol. 17, no. 7 (2004), p. 2.

75 BSAC, 'Difficult year ahead for the UK film industry', press release, 2 December 2004.

76 UK spend from inward investment increased in 2006 to £569.6 million, a rise attributed directly to returned confidence in the UK as a filmmaking destination due to the new film tax credit. UKFC, *Statistical Yearbook 2006/07* (London: UK Film Council, 2007), pp. 140, 143.

77 The Hoon Committee's members were Premila Hoon (chair), Larry Chrisfield, Fiona Clarke-Hackston, Christine Corner, Ken Dearsley, Ivan Dunleavy, Thomas Gardiner, Margaret Matheson, Andy Paterson, Marc Samuelson, Libby Savill, Barnaby Thompson, and Tim Willis.

Meanwhile, as this ‘official review’ was taking place, the Treasury was carrying out its own consultation as well as liaising with other stakeholders behind closed doors. Meetings were organized for independent film producers to meet personally with the film taxation team and give their views on policy proposals. Additionally, all the US studios met Treasury personnel, as their endorsement of the new fiscal structure was vital. It is open to question whether the DCMS and UKFC were centrally involved in these discussions. John Woodward has said that he was in direct talks with ministers at this time. However, when asked whether the UKFC would work closely with government in designing the new tax relief system, Woodward replied:

The truth is, and I’m afraid that this is an inescapable reality of Government, the Treasury doesn’t work that way. They talk to you, they listen, they ask, they take the views and then they shut the doors and say, ‘Thank you very much, we’ll come back to you’, and then they announce. It’s a fact of political life in Britain.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ BSAC, ‘BSAC Interview Series: interview with John Woodward’, p. 5.

However, Woodward did accompany a Treasury official to LA in April 2005, where they met representatives of the US studios to discuss the uncertainty surrounding UK tax reliefs. The studios confirmed that while it was currently not economically viable to make films in the UK, they would return if the value of tax relief increased. In the meantime, they criticized the ongoing Treasury consultation as ‘one-sided and not well handled’.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ UKFC Board minutes, 26 April 2005, p. 2.

Thus far we have illustrated how a fiscal structure for film has been developed in the UK. Fiscal incentives, initially conceived under a Conservative administration, became central to New Labour film policy. The approach taken rests predominantly on the need to offer attractive tax incentives to encourage inward investment from the USA. The influence of US stakeholders on government in devising and implementing this framework is clear. The preeminent role of HM Treasury, the driving force behind the implementation of tax reliefs, has been demonstrated, despite the policy being shared with the DCMS.

In 2005 the DCMS announced its intention to introduce a new ‘cultural test’: this would determine whether a film was ‘British’ and therefore whether or not it was eligible for tax incentives. In this way, a ‘cultural’ criterion was brought together with more self-evidently economic ones. The cultural test was to replace previous criteria for defining films as ‘British’ (outlined in Schedule 1 of the 1985 Finance Act). These had focused on the level of UK spend and the number of British film practitioners working on a production. The method for testing a film’s British credentials had changed little since its introduction in conjunction with the screen quota system in 1927.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Dickinson and Harvey, ‘Public policy and public funding for film’, p. 92.

Until now the role of the European Union has figured little in our account. However, the EU had become increasingly important in shaping British film policy towards the end of the twentieth century. In 1992 the

Maastricht Treaty was signed and the promotion of European culture was a central principle of this agreement. As noted, in the early 1990s the UK began to participate in pan-European initiatives, such as the then European Community's (EC) MEDIA Programme (focused on industry and competition) and the Council of Europe's Eurimages (which emphasized culture). It was during the 1994 GATT negotiations that the EC member states confronted the USA's dominance in the audiovisual sector and acted as a counterweight to the strength of the MPAA lobbyists. The EC, largely led by the French, argued that audiovisual 'goods' should be treated as a 'cultural exception'. The US government and the MPAA argued that this was protectionism. The matter was never resolved under GATT.⁸¹ In 1998 the Commission reviewed 'state aid' policies in the European cinema sector. It noted the many different forms of support across Europe, arguing for clarity in the legal framework, particularly in light of new digital technologies.⁸² The review found that many state aid initiatives had not been notified to the Commission, despite such notification being required by treaty. Such was the case in the UK, where the fiscal system set up by the Conservatives in 1992 was regarded as an investor relief system rather than 'state aid' and therefore was not notified to the Commission.

In September 2001 the Commission adopted a Communication on the future of the film and the audiovisual industry in Europe, which included an outline of the criteria for state aid schemes. These are supposed to strike a balance between 'cultural diversity and economic competitiveness'. The Commission has discretion over how it assesses the appropriateness of state aid.⁸³ The concept of a 'cultural derogation' is

provided for in the Treaty, which, in principle, ensures favourable treatment for the cultural sector, and implements a solution which ensures a balance between the objectives of cultural creation, the development of audiovisual production in the Union and compliance with Community law on State aid.⁸⁴

While the criteria included practitioners and expenditure, the Communication first and foremost stipulated that member states must also 'ensure the cultural content of the works supported'.⁸⁵ To ensure that the UK's FTC was eligible for state aid, its beneficiaries had to produce 'cultural products'. However, when the DCMS announced its proposals for a new cultural test in July 2005, the Creative Industries Minister, James Purnell, stated that the new test would allow producers a number of routes to classification and it was not the government's intention 'to dictate the content or subject matter of British films'.⁸⁶ The final framework was published in November 2005 after consultation with the industry.⁸⁷ The test comprised a points system for films. To be certified as 'British' and thus eligible for tax credits, films needed to accumulate sixteen points out of a possible thirty-two. 'Cultural content' could be awarded up to four points, 'cultural hub' relating to the location of production and post-production facilities and activities could score up to

81 Philip Schlesinger, 'From cultural defence to political culture: media, politics and collective identity in the European Union', *Media, Culture and Society*, vol. 19, no. 3 (1997), pp. 369–91.

82 European Commission, *Principles and Guidelines for the Community's Audiovisual Policy in the Digital Age*, COM, 657 final (Brussels: European Commission, 1999), p. 2.

83 Caroline Pauwels, Sophie de Vinck and Ben van Rompuy, 'Can state aid in the film sector stand the proof of EU and WTO liberalisation efforts?', in Katharine Sarikakis (ed.), *Media and Cultural Policy in the European Union* (New York, NY and Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), pp. 24–6.

84 European Commission, 'Commission adopts communication on future of cinema and audiovisual industry in Europe', press release, 27 September 2001.

85 Ibid.

86 DCMS, 'New cultural test for British films', press release, 5 December 2005.

87 DCMS, *Cultural Test for British Films: Final Framework*, 5 December 2005. <http://www.culture.gov.uk/reference_library/publications/3698.aspx> [accessed 1 May 2009].

fifteen points, and the nationality of key 'cultural practitioners' could bring in up to a further thirteen points.

The fact that the largest single number of points was allocated for being a 'cultural hub' drew on the broader New Labour creative industries policy, which emphasized maintaining the UK's skills base. To this end, film policy now prioritized US inward investment which could benefit from a state aid structure comparable to other film locations around the world. This was justified as 'a positive attempt to develop a sustainable film industry through the development of an indigenous film industry in a highly transnational market'.⁸⁸ However, clear tensions were evident, illustrating the UK's unique market position. On the one hand, the UK sought to attract the Hollywood majors, influenced by their lobbying when formulating the new FTC. On the other hand, the UK as part of the EU had to adhere to the Commission's rules regarding state aid for film. These rules were at odds with the government's focus on the UK as a 'hub' aiming to attract inward investment.

It was the UKFC's task to address these contradictory imperatives, although, as stated earlier, from the outset industrial objectives and relations with the USA were at the forefront of the film agency's strategic vision. Meanwhile, relations with the EU were more secondary, as was engagement with the Commission's cultural agenda. That said, the Board had acknowledged early on the need for the UKFC to build up and develop its relationship with the European Commission.⁸⁹ In May 2002 the UKFC, together with France's Centre National de la Cinématographie, had formed the European Film Agency Directors' group (EFADs).⁹⁰ In April 2003 the UKFC published its European Strategy outlining its aims, key activities and initiatives, plus the measures for determining the strategy's success. Additionally, the board held meetings in Brussels to engage with key people at the Commission.

The UKFC worked with the DCMS to devise the cultural test. Following industry consultation, this was passed by Parliament in April 2006. The legislation detailing the new FTC was announced in the March 2006 budget and contained in the 2006 Finance Bill, although the government still needed final approval from DG Competition at the European Commission. It was at this point, however, that the cultural test was rejected because it failed to comply with the Commission's cultural agenda. That this could have resulted in a delay in rolling out the FTC was of concern to an industry already subject to months of uncertainty. The government, therefore, had to negotiate quickly with the Commission to amend the test, although, according to one of our sources, many in the industry thought that the government had conceded too much.

The amended test differed greatly from the first version, with more emphasis placed on cultural factors. It still comprised three key sections, and sixteen points was still the required pass mark. However, the apportioning of points to each section had changed considerably: the number of points for 'cultural content' rose from four to sixteen, while

⁸⁸ Nick Redfern, 'Defining British cinema: transnational and territorial film policy in the United Kingdom', *Journal of British Cinema and Television*, vol. 4, no. 1 (2007), p. 159.

⁸⁹ UKFC Board minutes, 25 September 2001, p. 11.

⁹⁰ The EFADs group comprised an informal network of the directors of the national film agencies of twenty-five member states and lobbied on issues around European audiovisual policy.

91 DCMS, *British Film Certification, Schedule 1 to the Films Act 1985: Cultural Test Guideline Notes* (London: DCMS, 2007), p. 22.

92 The 'Golden Point Rule' is applied when a film scores the maximum points for 'cultural hub' and 'cultural practitioners' and is also filmed in the 'English language'. If the score is low for the Britishness of its setting and characters, it must instead score points for British subject matter. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

93 Chris Stark, 'Film tax credits: policy context', presentation to the UKFC Industry Seminar on Tax Reliefs and Cultural Test, 13 December 2006.

94 *UK Film Council Statistical Yearbook 2008*, ch. 15. <<http://www.ukfilmcouncil.org.uk/media/pdf/m/o/FINAL.pdf>> [accessed 1 May 2009].

'cultural hub' was reduced from fifteen to three. Films could now score no more than eight points for British 'cultural practitioners' (down from thirteen). Meanwhile, a fourth section was added for 'cultural contribution', whereby producers could score up to four points by demonstrating the role of their film in the 'promotion, development and enhancement of British culture'.⁹¹ The test was also subject to a 'Golden Point Rule': this prevented films with no British content other than the English language from being made in the UK. It was intended to stop US studios from making US films in the UK and thereby becoming beneficiaries of the FTC.⁹²

We have argued in this essay that UK film policy should be understood as both the outcome of contending political, economic and cultural forces and as the product of a long history of state intervention. Since the 1920s, British policymakers have sought to address competition from Hollywood by using a succession of economic measures. The most recent of these is the Film Tax Credit. This is just the latest instance of a long-term policy bias towards giving film special treatment. For HM Treasury, this is intended first to encourage the production of films that might otherwise not be made, second to promote the 'sustainability' of British film production, and third to maintain a 'critical mass' in the UK's infrastructure for creative and technical skills.⁹³

Ensuring the viability of a 'sustainable' UK film industry has been central to the UKFC's mission. But it is clear that sustainability does not – and cannot – rest alone on the capabilities of either domestic production or public investment. The UKFC's *Statistical Yearbook 2008* underlines yet again the crucial importance of inward investment productions, chiefly from the US studios, which accounted for seventy-one per cent of overall expenditure on production. The rationale for the FTC could hardly be clearer, given the strategic dependence of the entire film economy on the core contribution of US investment.⁹⁴ It is clear from our account that the Treasury's capacity to control the broad conditions that shape the environment for film production in the UK is limited. The British film industry has been profoundly shaped by its relationship to Hollywood for the best part of a century. Now, as the EU's impact on competition policy becomes increasingly felt, this too has to be factored in, as was evident from the recasting of the cultural test under pressure from Brussels.

Effective competitiveness for UK plc across all fronts has been a preoccupation of New Labour in office from the very start. As the UK's creative industries have been seen as enjoying a special advantage in the global economy, the DCMS has for more than a decade argued for enhancing the importance of this sector. Film – as one of the thirteen industries designated 'creative' – has come under the aegis of this policy drive, and indeed formed part of the context in which the UKFC was set up as a bridge between government and the film industry. However, as we have shown, the low politics of interdepartmental competition has meant that the small and weak DCMS has shaped the economic aspects

⁹⁵ DCMS, *Creative Britain: New Talents for the New Economy* (London: DCMS, 2008); Philip Schlesinger, 'Creativity: from discourse to doctrine', *Screen*, vol. 48, no. 3 (2007), pp. 377–87; Work Foundation, *Staying Ahead: the Economic Performance of the UK's Creative Industries* (London: Work Foundation, 2007).

of its policy in line with the Treasury's thinking. Consequently, while at first glance it looks as though the FTC is a quintessential measure of creative industries policy, which emphasizes the development of the talent base in order to engage in global competition, that is actually far from the case.⁹⁵ The FTC is entirely of a piece with the Treasury's historical interventionism. Film policy has always borne the distinctive stamp of the Treasury's thinking, where the perceived special status of film has resulted in distinctive fiscal measures not so far afforded to any other of the creative industries. Film is somehow seen as a special asset to the national economy and, to a lesser extent, as crucial to national identity. This standpoint, deriving from longstanding competition with Hollywood, has been deeply encoded in British policymaking, irrespective of party. The creation of the FTC, devised during Gordon Brown's watch at the Treasury, undoubtedly benefited from the fact that the Chancellor was known to be 'sympathetic' to the film industry.

Our sociological approach to film policy has begun to unravel some of the plays made by the DCMS and the Treasury over the ownership of policy. It has also allowed us to illustrate aspects of the complex and obscure dynamics of lobbying that has long surrounded film policy and which became particularly prominent under New Labour. Expertise – especially that mobilized through the use of film industry figures – has shaped the debate and secured policy outcomes. So too have the contradictory pulls across the Atlantic of the USA and the EU. British film policy has now reached its most recent fiscal accommodation. Just how long this will last – as the new loopholes in the Film Tax Credit are discovered and exploited – is quite another question.

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The cinematic image of José Antonio Primo de Rivera: somewhere between a leader and a saint

VICENTE SÁNCHEZ-BIOSCA

An intriguing sense of what might have been surrounds the account of the first film shot for the Falange, the Spanish fascist party founded by José Antonio Primo de Rivera in 1933. On 19 May 1935, cameramen Aizpurón and Alfonso Ponce set out to film the rally in a Madrid cinema at which Primo de Rivera would bask in the adulation of the masses as a true popular leader. When they came to edit this unique footage, the photographers were horrified to discover that there had been no film in the camera.¹ Opinion remains divided over whether this was a tragic mistake or a blessing in disguise.²

Film footage of Primo de Rivera is very rare, with excerpts from a 1935 Paramount newsreel filmed at his family home in Chamartín, Madrid, used again and again. In this short but striking clip, the leader and founding father of the Falange lays out the party's basic principles. He is dressed in a smart light raincoat, black trousers, white shirt and tie. His brilliantined hair gives him the air of an aristocrat or academic and he moves with confidence. As he approaches the camera, for some unknown reason he suddenly looks downwards but then recovers his composure. The film cuts to a medium-shot and he begins to speak:

We hold firm to the belief that the living heart of Spain is strong and sound. The country has been brought low by three forces that are tearing it apart – regional separatism, party rivalry and class divisions. [CLOSEUP] When Spain can unite around a common purpose, it will rise again as a great nation to recover its former glory.

1 'Datos para la historia cinematográfica de la Falange', *Primer plano*, no. 2, 27 October 1940, p. 5. See also 'El primer noticiario de Falange se rodó en noviembre de 1935', *Primer plano*, no. 215, 26 November 1944, p. 9.

2 The filming of the closing ceremony of the Consejo Nacional held on 17 November 1934 can scarcely be counted a success, given that the footage fell into enemy hands at the outbreak of war.

- 3 Letter from Primo de Rivera to his colleague Julián Pemartin, 2 April 1933, in José Antonio Primo de Rivera, *Textos de doctrina política*, ed. Agustín del Río Cisneros (Madrid: Delegación Nacional de la Sección femenina de FET y de las JONS, 1966), p. 50.
- 4 As correctly noted by Dionisio Ridruejo, appointed Head of Press and Propaganda by the first Francoist government of 1938, the unification of the party in 1937 was in effect a *coup d'état* since, in contrast to the position in Russia, Italy or Germany, it was not a case of 'a messianic party which had built itself up within the state but rather the Head of State who had built himself up on the foundation of the political parties in order to use them for his own ends'. Dionisio Ridruejo, *Con fuego y con raíces: Casi unas memorias* (Barcelona: Planeta, 1976), p. 106. A top-down unification under the banners of the Falange Española Tradicionalista (FET; Traditional Falange Party of Spain) and the Juntas de la Ofensiva Nacional Sindicalistas (JONS; Ruling Committee of the National Syndicalist Programme) was applied to all the nationalist political parties in Spain, despite the gross disparities between, for example, the traditionalist *carlistas* (ultra-conservative and strongly Catholic) and the most radical fascism of the so-called 'old guard' of the Falange.
- 5 The Spanish Civil War, 1936–39, which resulted in Francoist nationalist forces overcoming leftwing, Republican forces and the establishment of Franco's dictatorship.
- 6 Before the enactment of the law establishing the administrative structure of the state, propaganda received scant attention and was consigned to the control of various military personnel (the founder of the Légion Millan Astray being the first of these). It was FET and JONS that held the responsibility for propaganda. However, following the Decree of Unification of the Party in 1937 and the resultant installation of the Falange, the state itself took

Primo de Rivera's delivery shows him as a man of conviction and an experienced public speaker. But he is evidently unaccustomed to the camera. He seems wooden and ill at ease, his gaze wanders and he displays a nervous facial tic. It is a curiously unengaging and uninspiring performance. He was evidently aware that he lacked the rabble-rousing qualities necessary for a populist leader: in a letter to Julián Pemartin in 1935, he confessed: 'A populist leader must have something of the Old Testament prophet: equal parts faith, self-belief, zeal and a sense of outrage, none of which is compatible with decorum. I can be many things, but not that.'³ The true extent of his media potential remains unknown, because he was captured by leftwing Republican forces and executed in the early hours of 20 November 1936. By that time, totalitarian regimes in other European countries had already developed the propaganda skills that would enable them to build up the populist images of their leaders.

In contrast to those countries in which both fascism and media skills were more firmly established, fascism in Spain was a minority movement which actually turned its back on mass agitation as its influence grew.⁴ Nevertheless, in the early stages of the Spanish Civil War, the Falange made repeated attempts to establish its own style of propaganda cinema.⁵ In 1937 a forced merger brought together all the nationalist parties – ranging from the rural, traditionalist Carlists to the extreme rightwing Falangists. Now it was General Franco who provided the rallying point for nationalist sympathizers. In an extensive reorganization of the state in 1938, Franco took charge of the National Office of Press and Propaganda, which included the National Department of Cinematography directed by Manuel Augusto García Viñolas.⁶ Artists of all types and abilities were pressed into service to foster the Franco personality cult. In 1943 the state-controlled documentary newsreel production company NO-DO (Noticiarios y Documentales) was formed. By then, Falangist hardliners had been forced to abandon hopes of a more combative propaganda cinema. Although the reporting style of NO-DO was always biased towards presenting the nationalist regime in the best possible light, it was a far cry from the hard-hitting propaganda that the Falange had wanted. Franco would remain in power for almost the next forty years until his death in 1975, but his image would always be overshadowed by that of Primo de Rivera.⁷

Contemporary journals judged and found wanting all cinematic attempts to capture the spirit of the Falange in films such as *Raza/Race* (José Luis Sáenz de Heredia, 1942; the script was written by Franco himself under a pseudonym), Carlos Arévalo's brave but ill-fated offering *Rojo y negro/Red and Black* issued in 1942 and withdrawn soon after, and the whole genre of *cine de cruzada* with its glorification of Nationalist victories and military campaigns in North Africa.⁸ The actor and Falange supporter Fernando Fernández de Córdoba gave an interview on 'The Falange in Spanish cinema', in which his conclusion

charge of propaganda, although it left outstanding officials from the preceding administration in some of the most important posts. The reorganization took some time, as documented in Rosa Alvarez Berciano and Ramón Sala Noguera, *El cine en la zona nacional* (Bilbao: Mensajero, 2000).

- 7 For a panoramic overview, see Vicente Sánchez-Biosca (ed.), 'Materiales para una iconografía de Francisco Franco', in *Archivos de la Filmoteca*, nos 42–43 (2002), pp. 8–21, 140–61.
- 8 This was the term used to denote a group of films that emerged at the start of the 1940s, eulogizing the Spanish armed forces that had experienced their finest hour in the uprising (declared a 'crusade' by the Catholic Church) of July 1936.
- 9 *Primer plano*, no. 94, 2 August 1942, p. 16.
- 10 'Cómo cree Vd. que debe ser el cine español', *Primer plano*, no. 92, 19 July 1942, pp. 3–19.
- 11 George L Mosse drew attention to the importance of ritual and liturgical aspects of German National Socialism in a penetrating analysis now considered a classic, *The Nationalisation of the Masses: Political Symbolism and Mass Movements in Germany from the Napoleonic Wars through the Third Reich* (New York, NY: Howard Fertig, 1975). In a different setting, Emilio Gentile carried out a similar analysis of Italian Fascism as a religion of the people in *Fascismo: Historia y interpretación* (Madrid: Alianza, 2004).
- 12 An example of this opposite tendency is the film *Triumph of the Will* (Leni Riefenstahl, 1935), based on the Nazi rally of 1934 in the city of Nuremberg. Although Riefenstahl's filming may seem to be the ritualized documentation of an encounter between the Führer and the serried ranks of his followers, the shooting was the result of meticulous advance planning by Hitler's architect, and later Minister of Defence, Albert Speer, whose greatest work was the so-called 'Cathedral of Light'.

was that 'from the point of view of a Falange supporter . . . we still have no Spanish cinema worthy of the name'.⁹ A survey by the film magazine *Primer plano* in July 1942 generated a mixed response, with frequent reference to the need for firm control by the state and a focus on present-day reality rather than historical events.¹⁰ Rereading this material leaves the impression of a sense of discontent which never got beyond the level of polite complaint and which, in any case, became irrelevant after the events of 1945 swept away fascism in much of the rest of Europe.

A cinema of the Falange was destined to remain an unrealized aspiration.

Despite this, the Franco regime carefully cultivated the image of Primo de Rivera in a way which differed significantly from the approach adopted by other European dictatorships. Whereas other countries used the media, specifically cinema, to highlight the charisma of their current leader, the Franco regime concentrated on building up a posthumous image of Primo de Rivera as a fallen hero. For decades to come, Spaniards would be subjected to a funerary cult. There were clearly some advantages to this tactic of diverting attention away from the actual leader, not least for Franco himself.

The persona reconstructed around Primo de Rivera underwent a morbid transformation from politician to prophet, from agitator to martyr and saint, conceptually embalmed as a votive deity. There is much more that could be said on the contrast between this essential undercurrent of National Catholicism in Spanish fascism and its distinction from more innovative and radical varieties of European fascism, such as the fundamentally pagan ideology of German Nazism.¹¹

How did the Franco regime create, from its very earliest days, a culture of suppression and rigidity? Clearly cinema is an ideal instrument for a dictator who seeks to rouse the masses; less obvious is how such a modern invention could be pressed into service as part of a ceremonial process of beatification. Part of the answer must lie in the fact that emergent Spanish fascism could never have produced propaganda of the type associated with other contemporary European dictatorships, which allied themselves with progress, mass movements and a species of mystical identification between leader and people. The Spanish version has much more in common with the mediaeval Passion or Mystery play, a depiction of sacrifice and martyrdom whose evocation of mourning and grief does not readily lend itself to a call to arms.

I propose to concentrate on the development of this Spanish model of specifically religious charisma and how it contrasts with the projection in other totalitarian states of the leader as a figure whose Promethean attributes owe more to mythology than to Christianity.¹² I will draw on the earliest cinema footage produced by Spain's National Department of Cinematography dating from November 1938, when the Nationalist brigade decided that its hold on the reins of government was now sufficiently secure to allow it to break the official silence which had until then concealed news of the execution of their founding father, Primo de Rivera. I suggest that this documentary evidence, originating as it does

from an era in which the control of propaganda was in the hands of the most combative elements of the Falange, reveals that the roots of Spanish fascism go back far beyond the time of World War II to a much older Spanish literary and dramatic tradition – the Baroque tragedy whose pathos stirs the audience through pity.

By a decree of 16 November 1938, the date of 20 November was henceforward declared a day of national mourning, thus converting Primo de Rivera's death into a symbol for all the fallen of the nationalist uprising. The initial ceremonies to honour the slain hero had to be held without the presence of his body: Primo de Rivera was first buried at the site of his execution in Alicante, which at that time was still behind Republican lines. With the ending of the war, the prison in Alicante became a sacred memorial site at which devotional objects, relics and inscriptions commemorated the martyr. Now victorious, the Falange organized one of its most spectacular events.

Almost as soon as the city of Alicante was occupied, a party of Falange soldiers exhumed Primo de Rivera's body from the common grave to which it had been consigned and conveyed it to a specially prepared crypt. On the third anniversary of his execution, over a period of ten days (20–30 November), his mortal remains were borne from Alicante to the monastery of El Escorial outside Madrid. The funeral procession was met with unprecedented displays in every town and village it passed through. Ian Gibson may well have a point when he cites as a possible inspiration the procession which, in 1478, carried the body of Felipe El Hermoso from Brujas to Granada led by his grief-crazed widow Juana la Loca.¹³

If Alicante prison evoked the bitter association of its leader's ignominious execution by Republican forces, the Escorial stood for all that was great and glorious for the Falange. The monastery-palace, founded by King Phillip II, was the burial place for Spanish monarchs. Resting in such illustrious company, Primo de Rivera would thus partake of the royal lineage.¹⁴ His memory, recent but already mythical, would be incorporated into the legendary Spain of Faith and Empire to which the victors of the Civil War so fervently aspired.

But it was not to be. In 1959 the founding father's remains were once again exhumed and then borne on the shoulders of the Madrid Old Guard of the Falange, this time to the newly constructed monumental site of the Valle de los Caídos (Valley of the Fallen) at Cuelgamuros in the Sierra de Guadarrama, which would be his last resting place. In this final removal, much less splendid than the previous one, Primo de Rivera was effectively separated from any association with Monarchy and Empire and instead installed as merely the First of the Fallen, a more modest designation than that implied by his former regal mausoleum.

There must have been a certain sense of unease among the more sober and restrained elements of the population at the overblown splendour of these ceremonies. The handful of contemporary documentaries produced between 1938 and 1941 by the National Department of Cinematography

¹³ Ian Gibson, *En busca de José Antonio* (Barcelona: Planeta, 1980), p. 248.

¹⁴ This provoked repeated complaints on behalf of the Royal Family from Juan de Borbon, who considered this mixing of royalty with the political to be quite improper.

marked the apotheosis of a cult that would first stagnate then fossilize in the endless ritual repetitions so characteristic of Francoism. The first newsreel reports of Primo de Rivera's execution on 20 November 1936 are in the tenth edition of *El Noticiario Español* (The Newsreel of Spain), which first went out in December 1938, soon after the official announcement of his death. It shows the funeral ceremony in Burgos, the capital of Nationalist Spain. Judging by the sudden cuts the surviving footage is evidently incomplete, but it clearly shows the extent to which the memory and image of Primo de Rivera had been appropriated alongside other symbols of the Franco regime. A Moorish guard of honour flanks the arrival of Franco who, in accordance with the Decree of Unification, now wears the uniform and red beret of the Falange as he enters Burgos Cathedral, the holy of holies for the upper echelons of Nationalist military, politicians and clergy and the very site where Franco's own installation as Head of State had been filmed by the same cameras in October 1936. All the key figures in the new Nationalist Spain are present at the event, including Franco's wife Carmen Polo, the Head of Propaganda Dionisio Ridruejo, the State Adviser Jesús Suevos and the Portuguese ambassador Pedro Teotonio Pereira.¹⁵ It is noteworthy that Primo de Rivera, the father of the Falange, is treated both as a soldier, to whom the army offers its tribute, and as the founder of the political ideology which Franco now takes over as the national leader of the party.

Franco himself is the central focus of the event. Entering the Cathedral beneath a *palio* – the ceremonial canopy normally reserved for the monarch or for processions of the Body of Christ in the form of the Eucharist – he symbolically places a crown on the memorial stone and barks out the ritual address, his oration captured in live sound recording. In the surviving copy of the film, there then follow the opening bars of the national anthem of the Falange, *Cara al sol* (Face to the Sun), which are interrupted by an announcement in voiceover:

On the morning of 20 November an address to José Antonio Primo de Rivera is read out in schools, factories and fields throughout the land.

Thus, significantly, a recital of political ideology gives way to the expression of grief and loss.

El Noticiario Español produced newsreel reports of several other commemorative and funeral ceremonies, such as the procession carrying the remains of General Sanjurjo,¹⁶ and the dedication of the monuments to Mola¹⁷ and to that other early martyr for the cause, José Calvo Sotelo;¹⁸ but none of these bears comparison with the homages to Primo de Rivera.¹⁹ It is to his memory that the newsreels would repeatedly return in the decades to come.²⁰ The footage in *El Noticiario Español*, no. 17, dated March/April 1939, is particularly striking because it appears to be quite out of temporal sequence with contemporary events: Miguel Primo de Rivera is shown alighting from a plane in Burgos to make the 'first public announcement' of his brother's death, an event which had, in

15 For identification of the various individuals mentioned, see Alfonso de Amo and María Luisa Ibáñez, *Catálogo general del cine de la guerra civil* (Madrid: Cátedra, 1996), p. 667.

16 *El Noticiario Español*, no. 27.

17 *El Noticiario Español*, no. 1.

18 *El Noticiario Español*, no. 3.

19 Sanjurjo, one of the generals who took part in the 1932 uprising against the Republic, was invited to take over the leadership of the Movement of 1936 but was killed in a aeroplane accident on his return to nationalist Spain (he was in exile in Portugal). Emilio Mola, who died in similar circumstances, was the head of the Northern Army and in his day had a more prestigious reputation than Franco. José Calvo Sotelo, the political leader of the Spanish Right, was assassinated in July 1936, just five days before the uprising; in the official Francoist rhetoric his death at the hands of a group of assault troops was considered to be state-sponsored murder.

20 The removal of the mortal remains of Julio Ruiz de Alda from Navarra to Madrid was also the subject of a news item in *El Noticiario Español*, no. 23. This provided ample confirmation that the position of the Falange was quite on a par with that of the highest military commanders and, in the case of the Founder of the party, much superior.

Fig. 1.

The funeral procession. *¡Presente!*
En el enterramiento de José
Antonio Primo de Rivera (1939).



²¹ See del Amo and Ibáñez, *Catálogo general del cine de la guerra civil*, p. 677.

fact, been publicly announced and ceremonially commemorated months beforehand. To Alfonso de Amo, this suggests that Miguel's announcement was most likely recorded in March 1938 but then held back for some unknown reason probably connected with the timing of the decision to break the official silence over Primo de Rivera's execution.²¹ The status of the announcement as an eyewitness account of the final moments in the life of the founding father more than compensates for whatever it may lack in news value. Miguel is filmed in a blizzard of snow, evidently in mourning for his brother, with just one cut from medium-shot to closeup which may coincide with a pause in his discourse. The emotional charge of the footage is heightened by its rarity value as one of the few contemporary newsreel accounts whose content and symbolism do not refer to Franco. But, once again, the statement of Falange ideology to which Miguel makes reference is coloured or overshadowed by sorrow. In the very moment of his death, Primo de Rivera is raised to a higher plane where the personal charisma of the ideologue and political leader is exchanged for the halo of the saint. Who could fail to be inspired by this heartfelt eulogy from a grieving brother?

If there is one film which captures the heartbroken, lyrical, yet monumental vision of the fallen leader – and therefore expresses something of the very soul of Spanish fascism – it is the film produced by the DNC in 1939 under the title *¡Presente! En el enterramiento de José Antonio Primo de Rivera* (Present! At the funeral of José Antonio Primo de Rivera).²² Seldom does Spanish Nationalist propaganda cinema achieve such high production values as in this eighteen-minute and twenty-second film whose camerawork, editing, soundtrack and mise-en-scene rise to match the ceremonial splendour of the procession of Primo de Rivera's body to the Escorial. This may be the only occasion on

²² In advance of this, *El Noticiero Español*, no. 18 carried the news of the exhumation in the cemetery at Alicante of the body of Primo de Rivera, which was identified by the medals pinned to his chest.

which the image of another leader is permitted to eclipse so completely that of the chameleon-like Francisco Franco.

The film is announced in suitably mournful fashion:

The National Department of Cinematography, united in grief with the Spanish nation, presents the documentary '¡Presente! En el enterramiento de José Antonio Primo de Rivera'.

The words of the title appear on the screen as the camera tracks the solemn advance of the funeral procession. The photography of Enrique Gaertner (Guerner) is in high contrast, the voiceover of Ignacio Mateo emphatic to the point of theatricality (he would moderate his style in later years as a narrator for NO-DO newsreels). The music, derived from Wagner's *Twilight of the Gods*, lends a distinctly Germanic, mythic and legendary dimension to the proceedings. Evidently just as much care has been devoted to the formal aspects of the work as to its political significance. The coverage of the ten-day march seems underpinned by a mathematical structure that makes striking use of the natural rhythms of day and night, dawn and dusk, to suggest a cosmic trajectory by the fallen hero towards the future. It is a truly majestic example of finely wrought propaganda unique in the annals of Spanish fascism.

Structurally, the documentary falls into nine sections, mostly separated by fades to black. I will attempt to convey the articulation of the verbal and visual discourse, highlighting those points at which the imaginative construction of the dramatic character Primo de Rivera seems to be especially evident. The film opens with the words:

20 November 1936. As triumphant Nationalist forces marched towards victory, in the prison at Alicante the leftists shot our José Antonio Primo de Rivera.

This emotive, and clearly partisan presentation is accompanied by a succession of images showing the lines of battle superimposed over the front page of the daily newspaper *Heraldo de Aragón*, which carries announcements of Nationalist military advances. The first fade to black makes the transition to an establishing shot of daybreak over the fields around Alicante and the first images of the funeral cortege bearing the coffin with the hero's body (figure 1). The dissonance between the leader's prediction of victory and his death at the hands of the enemy is unexpected. However, we should distinguish between the Francoist rhetoric of the opening and the solemn funeral rites which follow. The dawn, a repeated image in Falange anthems for the glorious daybreak of Spain's great destiny, also references the deathwatch of that other fateful sunrise at which Primo de Rivera faced the firing squad. The transition to the solemn, rhythmic images of the funeral procession implies an ellipsis that somehow bypasses the dreadful moment of the execution, but also presents the countryside itself as portentous of the tragedy whose consequences are then seamlessly presented.

The voiceover continues, dispelling the initial impression of an immediate resort to mourning:

They hoped that by killing him they would destroy the resurgent spirit of Spain and silence the voice of conscience that cried out to them from the annals of history. For more than three years he lay buried, awaiting the dawn of this new victorious November day in which the Falange and the whole Spanish nation will release him from the soil of Alicante to bear him aloft on the shoulders of his warriors, their most dearly-won prize of battle, towards the lofty walls of the monastery of Saint Laurence of the Escorial.

Thus the Falange is explicitly cast as the backbone of the New Spain and the voice of Primo de Rivera as the heartfelt protest of Spain itself, a protest which traces its roots back to the literary generation of 1898 and further back to the entire history, or imagined history, of the nation. The voiceover now takes a melancholy turn, away from the poetic heights to which it has borne us, to the inevitable expression of a directionless grief, but tinged with the ranting tone which Francoism had already acquired:

Today we lower a memorial stone into that same Mediterranean sea which was the last scene to pass before his eyes and one of the innumerable sites in which Spain now commemorates him. The cortege passes through the city which expresses its grief at this last farewell in which men of the land and of the sea share alike. Arms raised high in salute, yokes and arrows [the symbols of the Falange] on display at the docks, sailors stand to attention on the decks and masts of naval ships. All pay homage to the founder of the Falange. Flags are flown at half mast, soldiers present arms. It was here that he was brought to the place of his death, to the prison at Alicante which now bears his name in commemoration, where his family and comrades offer prayers for him next to the cross placed on the spot where he fell, a victim of savagery and ignorance.

The exalted sentiments of the phrases pale into insignificance beside the superb shots of the sunrise over the Mediterranean, gleaming through the mists of the port of Alicante where the memorial stone was ceremonially dropped into the sea. The sparkle of the light, the slow camera movements following the point of view of the funeral procession which passes while sailors and townspeople alike raise their arms in salute, as still as statues in carefully-posed cinematic groupings, create a desolate and oppressive effect; but the overall impact on the spectator is curiously uplifting, thanks to the mastery of the lighting, editing and mise-en-scene. The excerpt recalls another famous revolutionary cinematic masterwork, the sequence of the morning mists in the port of Odessa in Eisenstein's *The Battleship Potemkin* (1925). This comparison merits more detailed analysis.

In that sequence, Eisenstein presents the confusion which follows the mutiny on the battleship and which ends with the betrayal and murder of the sailor, Vakulinchuk, who had incited his comrades to rebellion. The celebrated images are seen through the mists which swathe the port of Odessa, captured quite by chance by the cameraman Eduard Tissé and utilized by Eisenstein to suggest that nature itself is grieving, as if a funeral veil clouded the gaze of the men who rally round the dead sailor's body, overcome by respect and compassion. A boat bears Vakulinchuk's body to the quay where the people of Odessa will bid him farewell. The mournful effect of the scene itself precedes the images of actual mourning. The same funereal atmosphere provides the backdrop for both films. But while in *Potemkin*, the uncontrollable grief bursts out in a fury of revolutionary hatred, *¡Presente!* remains mired in grief, even though its opening words, and those which follow, seem to presage action.

It may seem difficult to consider these two films as comparable, given the ideological gulf that separates them. It is therefore worthy of note that *Potemkin*, together with Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* (1935), was perhaps the propaganda film most admired by those in Spain who clamoured for a cinema of the Falange, as referenced by Bartolomé Mostaza in the journal *Primer plano*.²³ A supporting cinematic reference appears in *Rojo y negro*, perhaps the only postwar example of unquestionably Falange cinema. The film uses two scenes from *Potemkin* to illustrate the rising tension and hatred which preceded the Civil War – the proletarian clenched fist in the sequence described in the last paragraph, and the masses scrambling down the stairs as the soldiers fire on the people. In both cases, the aim of the Spanish director Arévalo is to invert the ideological message of the original material, illustrating a recurrent tactic of Francoist cinema during the Civil War, the reutilization of enemy material.²⁴

Returning to my consideration of *¡Presente!*, another fade to black marks the transition to the third sequence, which concentrates on the long journey of Primo de Rivera's body through the Spanish countryside in a singular version of the Stations of the Cross. The most outstanding feature of this solemn section is the typically Falange concern with demonstrating the extent of popular devotion which Primo de Rivera inspired. The faces of authentic country folk are the expression of this revolutionary fascist sentiment, which would soon be sidelined by the Franco regime. The force of these images in their aspiration to an ancestral Spanish identity bring a radical documentary feel to this exercise in fascist aesthetic; the motionless labourer who gives the fascist salute as he stands by his donkey beneath an archway, the rough-hewn shepherd who raises his arm skyward, caught like a statue in silhouette next to his flock against the backdrop of the arid landscape of the plains, are scenes of breathtaking intensity, perhaps unrivalled in propaganda cinema (figures 2 and 3).²⁵ In this sequence, it is not the heavens that are clouded by the hero's death but rather the countryside and the country folk who most authentically typify that Spain for which Primo de Rivera

23 Bartolomé Mostaza, 'El cine como propaganda', in *Primer plano*, no. 10, 22 December 1940, p. 3.

24 Joaquín Reig, product of a German upbringing, member of the German Nazi party and director of propaganda in the early days of the Civil War, was arguably the greatest exponent of the art of which *España heroica/Helden in Spanien/Spanish Heroes* (produced by Hispano-Film-Produktion and codirected with Victor de la Serna in 1938) was probably the finest and most effective example of nationalist film propaganda.

25 Perhaps the sole exception, at least from the point of view of a less obvious ideology, is a curious news item entitled 'Romance de Puebla de Sanabria' (Romance of the People of Sanabria), included in *El Noticiero Español*, no. 12, which provides an unparalleled example of a popular epic style and manages to avoid completely the traps of caricature and folklore.

Sharp realism: two visions of the rural Spain. *¡Presente! En el enterramiento de José Antonio Primo de Rivera* (1939).



Fig. 2.



Fig. 3.

so fervently longed, the land of simple honest folk. It would not be an exaggeration to detect in this traverse of the plains of Castile an idea of the eternal authentic Spain which the founder of the Falange had inherited from the literary generation of 1898, that same generation to which Pedro Laín Entralgo dedicated an essay expressing similar sentiments in the 1940s.²⁶ The mastery of *¡Presente!* lies in the way in which it captures possibly the very last cinematic images of what might be described as ‘primitive’ Spain.

²⁶ Pedro Laín Entralgo (1947), *La generación del 98* (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1997).

27 These curious cross-fertilizations were not uncommon in the 1930s and had a decisive influence on the development of the artistic and cinematic avant garde. The path trodden by Buñuel, from provocative surrealism (*Un chien andalou* [1929], *L'âge d'or* [1930]) via anthropological documentary (*Las hurdes* [1933]) to political propaganda in the service of the threatened Republican government (*España 1936* [1937]), is a striking example.

28 That *¡Presente!* represented an work of outstanding quality, a classic worthy of imitation, was evident from the fact that DNC included five minutes of its footage as the third and final news item in *El Noticiero Español*, no. 28.

This version of photographic realism is clearly not exempt from ideological bias. But it does indicate a distinctly different approach from the Italian attempts at synthesis of experimental Futurism with the glories of Imperial Rome or the mixture of national folklore and monumental architecture so characteristic of Nazi Germany.²⁷ The style of *¡Presente!* has little in common with the conventional military approach more customary in representations of uprising or victory; instead it seems to be rooted in the movement of the avant garde, already heavily politicized by the 1930s. It is an altogether different vision which underpins the images of *¡Presente!*, one which comes close to the attempts of the originators of the Falange to unite popular appeal with the heroic spirit – all beneath the shadowy wings of the angel of death. The voiceover continues:

And so the funeral procession of Primo de Rivera takes to the winding highways of Castile, drawing the country to it at every step. Supporters from every province come out to greet him in a dawn of recognition. And as the cortege wends its way from the shores of the Mediterranean, through the rich farmlands of the Levante, over the stony ground of La Mancha and the ancient fields of New Castile, crossing the olive groves and the mountains, by day and by night, under the sacramental light of clear November skies, passing by the still-visible battle trenches, by the military encampments, the people are touched, roused by his death as they were by the vigour of his life, stirred to fraternal love, the true spirit of Spain in its most unflinching aspect.

The text continues:

From fields and towns he is greeted by farm labourers, by women, by the Falange youth who have travelled long miles to mark the passing of Primo de Rivera. The towns are filled with crowds dressed in blue shirts who decorate their houses in remembrance and build triumphal arches. The people sense the importance of the occasion and appreciate the legacy of this new Caesar, founder of the ideals of the new State which Franco has won by force of arms. And so the procession crosses the territory which for three long years was the encampment of the International Brigade and dominated by Marxist terror, now won back through the military genius of Franco and incorporated into the unifying mission of national syndicalism.

Anyone familiar with the unchanging complaint of Marxism as disunity, which soon became the hallmark of traditional Francoist rhetoric, cannot fail to be surprised by these initial attempts to overlay a constructive spirit of nation-building on the pervasive atmosphere of loss.²⁸ The theatre of the Civil War, which it is sobering to recall had ended only six months earlier, now becomes the setting for the passage of a great crusading army which will unknowingly reopen wounds still unhealed in its march through the dusty plains of a country not yet accustomed to considering itself united. The documentary does not allow its ideology to conceal the nature of this

reality, readily evident in the faces of the farm labourers, in the towns, in the ramshackle settlements and in the wartorn land itself. Rather the film revisits and incorporates these scenes without attempting to soften their brutal intensity or force them into a conventional narrative. Franco is presented here as little more than the armed fist in the service of Primo de Rivera's ideology.

One more fade to black brings this dramatic journey to a close, to open the fourth part in which the funeral party enters Madrid. Here again, there is no attempt to disguise the uncomfortable reality; the most bloodstained sites of the recent past are subjected to inspection as the cortege solemnly halts its progress. The Model Prison and the City University both became emblems of nationalist propaganda, the first cast as a place of bloodthirsty Republican reprisal, the second as the site of the most prolonged and ferocious battle of the whole Civil War.

And so at the end of ten days of grief bravely borne, the capital of Spain where he lived and struggled now receives him back in an unforgettable act of reverence. Those same streets and squares which bore witness to the courage and force of his convictions now see him return. If then it was only a few supporters who heeded his words, now his voice will resound down the centuries.

The final journey of Primo de Rivera must take him through this emotionally charged spot of the Model Prison where he spent so many unhappy hours and whose crumbling walls now seem to resound with the salutes of fallen comrades.

The cortege passes through the ruins of the City University and the government now presides at the funeral ceremony itself. The army, honouring him as its Commander in Chief, files past his body. Passing over the enemy trenches, as though in a final solemn act of redemption, the casket is borne towards the monastery of the Escorial.

The people of the countryside had turned out to salute Primo de Rivera in the heartlands of Spain, scarred by the still evident battle trenches. Now the city where he lived did the same, the camera recording public response and shown in counterpoint to the images of the cortege (figure 4). Shots of the faces of women and children increase the sense of popular devotion because, as the voiceover tells us, 'now the whole of Spain is for the Falange' to such an extent that the Armed Forces lay their tributes to Primo de Rivera in the manner normally reserved for the most distinguished military commanders. It is hard now to avoid a sense of the fundamental split in the foundations of the ideology that the film proposes: on the one hand the feeling of loss turning to a paralyzing melancholy, on the other hand a convulsive change born of an unstable mood of euphoria.

With another fade to black, the screen images bring us to the journey's final destination, the most redolent historical site for Francoists and Falange alike, bearing as it does the seal of the Spanish Empire.

Fig. 4.

The reception of the hero in Madrid. *¡Presente! En el enterramiento de José Antonio Primo de Rivera* (1939).



In the monastery of the Escorial, now awaiting the arrival of the body of Primo de Rivera are His Excellency the Head of State and of the Party, the government, the senate, the diplomatic corps, foreign delegates, the hierarchy of the Church and the Army, State counsellors and 100,000 members of the Falange who are grouped around the monastery to form a final guard of honour to their fallen leader.

At the going down of the sun, Primo de Rivera is borne to the monastery on the shoulders of his comrades, just as when he left Alicante and as throughout the entire five hundred kilometre journey. [LONG PAUSE]

And now the body of José Antonio Primo de Rivera is reverently deposited in the monument which commemorates our ultimate victory. Thus the promise of the new dawn is fulfilled, banners unfurled in the triumph which was his dream.

These last phrases evoke associations with stirring verses composed in the epic style, in which the new dawn hailed in the Falange national anthem is associated with the historic victories of the Spanish Empire's glory days. Death is transformed to triumph, and at the day's end we hear captured on the soundtrack the evening prayers. The realization of this prophetic vision leaves no room for doubt or uncertainty: the nation's victory heals the breach in a dream come true. This forms the link with the sixth part in which we hear the long-awaited message of Franco in his capacity as Head of the Falange as well as Chief of State. His words are eloquent:

José Antonio, symbol and example for our youth, in this moment in which we commit you to the earth of this land which you so loved, as over Spain we glimpse that bright new dawn which was your dream, I recall your own words:

May God now grant you the eternal rest which we can share only when we have safely gathered in for Spain that harvest which your death has sown

José Antonio Primo de Rivera! [THE CROWD RESPONDS: Present!]

The dawn of the new day is here equated with the victory of Nationalist Spain in that apocalyptic spirit so characteristic of fascism. The fact that Franco is singled out for live recording in direct speech both acknowledges his key ceremonial function and confers a special quality on his words. It is as though the cycle which began with grief for a leader denied a decent burial has now come full circle with the ceremonial entombment which will convert Primo de Rivera from ideologue and founder of a political ethos to the status of fallen hero.

However, what follows seems to contradict the preceding sense of closure, particularly given that the founding father has now received a decent Christian burial. The next shot takes us into cosmic realms, up into the night sky whose points of light give a daringly literal sense to the metaphor in the lines of the Falange national anthem which hails the fallen as ‘guardians of the stars’ (figure 5). His heroism now takes on superhuman proportions:

Your presence leaves an indelible impression. We can never forget how your words and your resolve inspired Spanish youth to prepare for that decisive moment.

Despite the astrological references in the preceding passages, this cinematic ascension to the heavens is a voyage of sanctification. Primo de Rivera’s successors will in future interpret his words more as the allegories, parables or predictions of a visionary than as the prescriptive ideology of the founder of a political party.



Fig. 5.

The starry firmament where the fallen live. *¡Presente! En el enterramiento de José Antonio Primo de Rivera* (1939).

Fig. 6.

Primo de Rivera before the cameras of Paramount News (1935).



It is at precisely this point in the film, with the founding father newly laid to rest, that he reappears in a true moment of epiphany. The words of the resurrected leader are no longer a statement of political principles but rather a prophecy. They are the lines from the Paramount interview of 1935 quoted at the outset of this essay, and the images are the familiar shots at the doorway of the family home from the same footage (figure 6). Placed in this very different context his message acquires a new significance, one which appears to grant the favour his brother Miguel claimed to have asked of him: Primo de Rivera now returns to speak to us from another world and another time.

The film seems to insist that his destiny lies beyond this world. The camera takes us back up into the stars from which we descended only long enough to savour the closing words of the reanimated hero. Now we are returned to the starry firmament, the narrator's voice is stilled, perhaps by the impossibility of putting any kind of full stop to the utterance of a saint. The resulting silence marks the authentic canonization of the fallen leader.

In 1932 the distinguished radical Spanish fascist Ernesto Giménez Caballero theorized that 'for Spain, fascism is really Catholicism'.²⁹ This may find an echo in theories of the distinctive nature of leadership in Spain (by Francisco Javier Conde and Juan Beneyto, among others³⁰) and may also have created a climate of expectation in which the media contributed to the creation of a religious persona for Spain's only real fascist hero, Primo de Rivera. What we do know for certain is that it was only after his death that this cinematic image became fully formed, forged from conflicting emotions of partisan fervour and crushing sorrow, and he emerged somewhere between a fallen hero and a saint. It is possible that the very scarcity of images of the leader may have

²⁹ Giménez Caballero, *Genio de España. Exaltaciones a una resurrección nacional y del mundo*, 5th edn (Madrid: Jerarquía, 1939), p. 225.

³⁰ Juan Beneyto, *El Nuevo Estado Español. El régimen nacional-sindicalista ante la tradición y los sistemas totalitarios* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1939); Francisco Javier Conde, *Contribución a la doctrina del caudillaje* (Madrid: Vicesecretaría de Educación Popular, 1942).

³¹ As made clear by Mosse in *The Nationalization of the Masses*, ch. 1, the devotional ceremony was common currency in fascist movements, building on a long tradition of commemorative memorials, a proliferation of national symbols and the cult of the master race. The tributes to the fallen of World War I in Germany constitute one of the outstanding examples of such ceremonial events.

³² Francisco Moret-Messerli, *Comemoraciones y fechas de la España nacionalsindicalista* (Madrid: Vicesecretaría de Educación Popular, 1942).

³³ *El Valle de los Caídos* (The Valley of the Fallen), located in the heart of the Sierra de Guadarrama on the outskirts of Madrid, was a fascist mausoleum *par excellence*, raised in memory of the Nationalist victims of the Civil War (although official publicity always insisted on the possibility that Catholic Republicans could also be buried there). The idea first occurred to Franco in 1940 but construction works were repeatedly delayed. When it finally had its official inauguration in 1959, many of the spaces, especially those designed for mass rallies, clearly belonged to a vanished age. The era of fascism in Europe had ended fifteen years earlier; however, it was maintained as a site for special religious events.

fostered his cult, a phenomenon well-recognized in the Catholic tradition.³¹

¡Presente! is the one real example of a cinematic text on Spanish fascism. Its post-mortem nature makes it undeniably morbid, as indeed was the fetishization of Primo de Rivera which took place during his life. That the leader who was for so long referred to as *El Ausente* (The Absent One) should finally be reclaimed with cries of *¡Presente!* has a certain irony. In the homonymous film, Primo de Rivera is indeed physically present, though dead, but he is raised up before our very eyes to undergo a hurried canonization which makes him both morally untouchable and politically unusable.

In 1942 that specialist in rituals, Moret-Messerli, proposed and sanctioned a calendar of Francoist celebrations. His *Breviario nacionalsindicalista* (National Syndicalist Prayer Book) was a response to a national competition organized by the Under-Secretary for Education of the People.³² Two dates acquired a particular significance for the Falange: 29 October commemorated the day in 1933 on which the Falange party was founded and held its first public event in the Teatro de la Comedia in Madrid, while 20 November commemorated the death of Primo de Rivera in 1936. It is a curious detail that 29 October was described by Moret-Messerli as being both a ‘celebration of the foundation of the Falange’ and a ‘day of commemoration for the fallen’ while 20 November is described as a ‘day of national mourning’. The commemoration of the doctrinal event, the foundation of the Falange, was already becoming confused with, and soon was completely overshadowed by, a ritualistic mourning for what had been lost. In this sense the Spanish variety of fascism was very different from German Nazism, in which the imperative to action had superseded the pathos of grief.

Fate had one last cruel trick in store for Primo de Rivera and it occurred when Francisco Franco died in the arms of his family – on 20 November 1975. Once again Franco robbed him of what was rightly his, only this time unintentionally. For years Franco had basked in the inherited glory of the title of Head of the Falange as well as the symbolic firepower of Primo de Rivera’s memory. Three days later, on 23 November 1975, Franco’s remains were deposited in a new tomb occupying most of the small space in the chapel of the Valley of the Fallen, formerly allocated to the tomb of the founder of the Falange.³³

Translated by John Shanks

Cinema in progress: New Uruguayan Cinema

DAVID MARTIN-JONES and SOLEDAD MONTAÑEZ

In the 2000s, New Uruguayan Cinema – a film movement that had been gathering momentum for nearly two decades – emerged in the international arena. European film festival awards recognized *25 Watts* (Juan Pablo Rebella and Pablo Stoll, 2001; Rotterdam), *En la puta vida* (Beatriz Flores Silva, 2001; Huelva), *El viaje hacia el mar* (Guillermo Casanova, 2003; Huelva), *Whisky* (Juan Pablo Rebella and Pablo Stoll, 2004; Cannes, Huelva, Thessaloniki), *Alma mater* (Álvaro Buena, 2004; San Sebastián), *El baño del Papa* (Enrique Fernández, 2007; San Sebastián) and *La Perrera* (Manolo Nieto, 2006; Rotterdam). This report focuses on two of these films, Casanova's *El viaje hacia el mar* and Rebella and Stoll's *Whisky*, bringing to light the developing production context from which they emerged, and their status as representative works of two different filmmaking generations whose films are increasingly well received both nationally and internationally.

Since the end of dictatorship in 1985 there has been a slow, faltering but progressive growth of film production in Uruguay. This phenomenon is best understood in terms of two emergent generations of filmmakers. *El viaje*'s director Casanova belongs to the generation which emerged as Uruguay began to rebuild after the end of military rule. This generation also produced Beatriz Flores Silva (*La historia casi verdadera de Pepita la Pistolera* [1993], *En la puta vida*), Pablo Dotta (*El Dirigible* [1994]), Carlos Ameglio (*El hombre de Walter* [1994], *La cáscara* [2007]), Pablo Rodríguez (*Gardel: ecos del silencio* [1997], *Maldita cocaína – Cacería en Punta del Este* [2001]), Diego Arsuaga (*Otario* [1997], *Corazón de fuego/El último tren* [2002]), Álvaro Buena (*Una forma de bailar* [1997],

Alma mater), Luis Nieto (*La memoria de Blas Quadra* [2000], *Estrella del sur* [2002]), Leonardo Ricagni (*El Chevolé* [2002]), Esteban Schroeder (*El viñedo* [2000], *Matar a todos* [2007]), Aldo Garay (*La espera* [2002]), César Charlone (although primarily working in Brazil) and Enrique Fernández (*El baño del Papa*).

This was a generation, mostly born in the 1950s and 1960s, with memories of a pre-dictatorship past, whose formative years were lived under military rule (1973–85). In the years following dictatorship this generation worked against the odds, scraping together minimal funds and producing artisanal films on shoestring budgets. This was a generation for whom filmmaking involved both collaboration and first-hand experience of various aspects of the filmmaking process (writing, directing, editing, and so on). Many directors worked in various capacities on films by their contemporaries: Casanova edited Buela's *Una forma de bailar*, on which Garay was assistant director; Enrique Fernández was the writer of Arsuaga's *Otario*, and Luis Nieto of Rodríguez's *Maldita cocaína – Cacería en Punta del Este*; Arsuaga was the cinematographer on Ameglio's *El hombre de Walter*. Indeed, many of the crew members of these films worked on the same projects, including Natacha López, executive producer of *Una forma de bailar* and *El viaje*.

Influential for many in this generation were organizations such as Imágenes and the Centro de Medios Audiovisuales (CEMA; Centre for Audiovisual Media). CEMA was a civil association founded in 1982 by a group of friends, including Alejandro Barreiro, Esteban Schroeder and Eduardo 'Pincho' Casanova (the brother of Guillermo). They received funds from various sources outside Uruguay, including Canada, Sweden, Germany and Holland, many of them through the Catholic Church – for instance via the Asociación Canadiense para el Desarrollo Internacional (ACDI; Canadian Association for International Development). CEMA offered its services to existing social, political and cultural organizations that were challenging the final years of authoritarian rule. It produced artisanal, alternative audiovisual works, using slideshows and video, for various Uruguayan trades unions and social organizations. Amongst those who worked on projects for CEMA during the 1980s and early 1990s were Guillermo Casanova, Enrique Fernández, Flores Silva and Schroeder.¹

Equally important in fuelling this grass roots emergence of filmmaking was the Fondo para el Fomento y Desarrollo de la Producción Audiovisual Nacional (FONA; Fund for the Promotion and Development of National Audiovisual Production), established by the Intendencia Municipal de Montevideo – División Comunicación (City Hall) in 1995. The annual fund was provided by the four cable television companies in exchange for the right to run their cables through Montevideo.² This fund promoted audiovisual production in Uruguay, enabling filmmakers to bid for project seed money. Although only fourteen projects were submitted for consideration in 1995, every subsequent year has seen approximately

¹ E-mail correspondence with Eduardo 'Pincho' Casanova, 27 September 2007.

² Tamara L. Falicov, 'Film policy under MERCOSUR: the case of Uruguay', *Canadian Journal of Communication*, vol. 27, no. 1 (2002), pp. 33–46, p. 41.

3 Intendente Municipal de Uruguay, FONA. <<http://www.montevideo.gub.uy/fona/>> [accessed 5 July 2009].

thirty to forty submissions. The funding on offer is modest: for instance, in 1999, *El viaje* received the then average sum of US\$80,000. Even so, a brief roll call of some of the early winners illustrates the impact FONA had on this generation. In 1996 (a year in which Rodríguez's *Gardel: ecos del silencio*, Arsuaga's *Otario* and Ricagni's *El Chevolé* all competed), Buela's *Una forma de bailar* was a winner. In 1997 Flores Silva's *En la puta vida* was amongst those honoured, in 1998 Nieto's *La memoria de Blas Quadra* and Schroeder's *El viñedo*, in 1999 Casanova's *El viaje*, and so on.³ Thus, although it would not be accurate to state that in these years there was no Uruguayan cinema without FONA, there were certainly fewer productions before FONA, and many Uruguayan films were started with funding from FONA.

FONA also played a role in facilitating production for the second generation. Although Stoll and Rebella's first feature, *25 Watts*, was not amongst the winners in 1998, *Whisky* made the grade in 2002. *Whisky* is a product of a younger generation, many of whom were born during the 1970s and raised during and after dictatorship. The output of this generation is as yet small, but it illustrates strong potential for the future, despite the tragic death of Rebella in 2006. This generation already boasts Manolo Nieto's feature *La Perrera* (on which many of the crew of *Whisky* worked), Federico Veiroj's *Acné* (2007), Adrián Biniez's *Gigante* (2000), and several shorts, such as Manolo Nieto and Diego Fernández's *Nico & Parker* (2000), Daniel Hendler and Arauco Hernández Holz's *Perro perdido* (2002), Veiroj's *Bregman, el siguiente* (2004) and Biniez's *8 horas* (2006).

The multi-functioning across different film productions also exists within this generation: Fernando Epstein produced *25 Watts*, *Whisky* and *La Perrera*, as well as editing *Whisky* and *La Perrera*; Hernán Musaluppi worked on the production of *Whisky* and *La Perrera*; Diego Fernández was production manager on *Whisky* and codirector of *Nico & Parker* with Manolo Nieto; Gonzalo Delgado worked on the script for *Whisky* as well as the art direction of *Whisky*, *La Perrera* and *8 horas*; director Veiroj acted in *Nico & Parker* and *25 Watts*.

One factor linking these filmmakers is their educational background, in particular that of Epstein, Rebella and Stoll at the Universidad Católica de Montevideo. These three figures would later create Control Z Films to distribute *25 Watts*, and to coproduce *Whisky*, *La Perrera*, *Acné* and *Gigante*. This generation also benefits from the education provided by members of the previous generation, such as Buela, who is now resident at the Instituto ORT, and Flores Silva, who was previously director of the Escuela de Cinematografía del Uruguay (ECU; Uruguayan School of Cinema). Also teaching at ECU are first-generation figures Enrique Fernández and Natacha López, alongside second-generation representatives Diego Fernández and Manolo Nieto.⁴

The success of these filmmakers on the international festival circuit has pushed domestic production into the limelight in Uruguay, being

4 Escuela de Cine del Uruguay. <<http://www.ecu.edu.uy/contenidos/docentes.htm>> [accessed 5 July 2009].

5 Manuel Martínez Carril and Guillermo Zapiola, *La historia no oficial del cine Uruguayo (1898–2002)*. <<http://www.cinemateca.org.uy/documentos.html>> [accessed 5 July 2009].

recognized in the public sphere by critics such as Manuel Martínez Carril and Guillermo Zapiola.⁵ Uruguayan cinema, then, has become an identifiable phenomenon at home and abroad. The following analysis of two representative films demonstrates how this has been achieved slightly differently by the two generations.

El viaje hacia el mar is an adaptation of a short story by Uruguayan writer Juan José Morosoli (1899–1957). It depicts a slow Sunday in 1963 on which five male friends from the small rural town of Minas set out to see the sea. Rodríguez (Hugo Arana) owns the flatbed truck in which they travel. He is joined by Siete y Tres, Diez (Seven and Three, Ten; Julio César Castro), so nicknamed because he sells lottery tickets, his dog Aquino, Quintana the gravedigger (Julio Calcagno), Rataplán the street sweeper (Diego Delgrossi), a farm foreman El Vasco (Héctor Guido), and a mysterious stranger from out of town. Although several of the characters are advancing in years, this is the first time they will have seen the sea. As the road movie progresses the characters talk and sing, pass assorted characters by the roadside, visit a wealthy seaside resort, have a barbecue, and eventually reach the sea.

In the international arena *El viaje* was either praised for its apparently universal human warmth or compared favourably with similar road movies of the same time, such as David Lynch's *The Straight Story* (1999) and the Argentine film *Historias mínimas* (Carlos Sorín, 2002).⁶ In terms of the festival circuit, the success of *El viaje* can be attributed to the universal appeal of its nostalgia for a past where life was lived at a slower pace, and simple pleasures like seeing the sea for the first time were still available, even in old age. Although its success in Spain and Argentina is perhaps unsurprising due to the similarities of culture and language, its broader appeal is undoubtedly due to its apparent lack of national specificity. Comparisons with *The Straight Story* are telling. Both films are products of distinct national contexts yet facilitate a level of enjoyment for the viewer from outside this context due to their simple, 'heartwarming' story of a journey made in old age. In addition, the period setting of *El viaje* taps into nostalgia for a small-town past that can be appreciated worldwide (as in, for example, *Mediterraneo* [Gabriele Salvatores, 1991] and *Il Postino* [Michael Radford, 1994]). Thus, in the Uruguayan context, with its lack of industrial infrastructure and its minuscule internal market (with a population of around three million), making a low-budget road movie (the film cost in the region of US\$500,000⁷) with universal appeal to global audiences seems a particularly astute move.

El viaje was also extremely popular in Uruguay. It played for seven months in cinemas and is still a popular DVD, especially amongst the diaspora. Casanova was keen to embed his adaptation within Uruguay, researching Morosoli's background and talking to the author's daughters about their father's inspiration in the life stories of the people who worked for him during the early decades of the twentieth century.⁸

6 Jorge Jellinek, 'El viaje hacia el mar', *The Thinking Eye: Latin American and Spanish Online Magazine*, no. 3 (2003). <http://www.eloquepiensa.udg.mx/ingles/revis_04/secciones/cinejour/artic_10.html> [accessed 5 July 2009].

7 Interview with Guillermo Casanova in Montevideo, Uruguay, 19 July 2007.

8 Ibid.

9 John King, *Magical Reels: a History of Cinema in Latin America* (London: Verso, 2000), pp. 97–8; Mario Handler, 'Starting from scratch: artisanship and agitprop', in Julianne Burton (ed.), *Cinema and Social Change in Latin America*, (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1986), pp. 13–24, p. 15.

10 King, *Magical Reels*, p. 98.

11 Interview with Guillermo Casanova.

12 Ibid.

Although the production included cast and crew from Argentina, Casanova made a point of using predominantly Uruguayan talent both in front of and behind the camera. Of the principal six characters, with the exception of the well-known Argentine Hugo Arana as Rodríguez, the actors were all Uruguayan. In this, *El viaje* stands in contrast to the previous Morosoli adaptation *Viento del Uruguay* (1989), which, although shot in Uruguay, was made for Swiss television by Italian-Swiss director Bruno Soldini, in Italian, with an Italian cast.

In its content, Casanova's situating of the film in Uruguay went much further than the more obvious markers of national identity such as the period locations, vehicles and costumes, the drinking of the national drink *mate*, and the passing identification of many characters as European immigrants from various countries. Although the original story was set in 1957, *El viaje* is set in 1963, a time of rising inflation at the beginning of a decade when the economic and social turmoil that would plague Uruguay for the rest of the twentieth century began in earnest. This economic crisis was caused by the decline in its export market (particularly in beef and wool) previously fostered by World War II and the Korean War.⁹ The fallout from this decline in national prosperity would ultimately create the conditions for dictatorship.¹⁰ Thus, although the reason for this date was primarily autobiographical (1963 was the year of Casanova's birth, and the resort through which the truck passes replicates a childhood memory),¹¹ it was also a point of national transition that has wider ramifications for the film's negotiation of national identity.

Casanova's intent was to capture a more innocent time from Uruguay's past, a time when, he argues, poverty was still associated with dignity.¹² Such a return to the past is not unusual in Uruguayan culture, being a recurrent theme in Uruguayan literature, where the nation's so-called 'Golden Age' (the 'Uruguay of the fat cows', or the 'Switzerland of America') is evoked as an idealized 'lost' past by writers from the 'Generación del 45' onwards. This seemingly clear division of the nation's history into 'before' and 'after' military rule creates a demarcation from over fifty years of economic and social prosperity. Thus, in *El viaje*, returning to a pre-dictatorship past provides the spectator with a nostalgic moment in which to reconsider and potentially reclaim aspects of national identity that, although now associated with the dictatorship, preexisted it. This is most evident in one notable moment, in which the characters sing the song, *Mi Bandera* (My Flag).

The sequence takes place early on in the journey, and begins with a discussion about Aquino the dog. His owner, Siete y Tres, Diez, tells his companions that he named the dog after the last famous cattle rustler, Martín Aquino. When asked if this is because the dog, 'always slips through', Siete y Tres, Diez delivers the punch line: 'No, because when he sees a military uniform he goes for it'. Shortly afterwards, Rodríguez explains at length to El Vasco his theory of travel:

You go slowly but surely. Take your time, stop a bit, get down, light a cigarette, look around and see what you left behind. . . . Because all the driver sees is what lies ahead, but the real journey is what's behind you. Then one day you tell your buddies about it and it all comes back to you clear as crystal. And then maybe you even feel like going back again.

Immediately following this, the men attempt to find a song that everyone knows, settling on *Mi Bandera*, a song about the Uruguayan flag.

This sequence thus begins with a humorous dig at the recent past under military dictatorship, rendered in a lighthearted way by characters from the pre-dictatorship past. It proceeds through a lengthy discourse on the need to journey forward in a way that will make you proud to return to your past, and finally ends with exactly such a revisitation of the past in the singing of *Mi Bandera*. This patriotic song was stigmatized in the national consciousness by its use under authoritarian rule, and was immediately recognizable to Uruguayan audiences as a link to the past under dictatorship. Yet, when this song is sung in a pre-dictatorship setting, it throws into question accepted notions of Uruguayan history – creating a link to a different national past, a place you might ‘even feel like going back’ to once more – an effect that was not lost on contemporary reviewers.¹³

13 Jellinek, ‘El viaje hacia el mar’.

Due to the impact of the economic crisis in 2002, as *El viaje* was being completed, Casanova received literally nothing for his four years’ work. Yet one reason why the film remains so popular after the crisis is that its virtual recreation of a time when, for Casanova, there was a certain dignity associated with poverty, resonates for contemporary audiences. The national past into which the viewer is granted a glimpse, is, in this respect, also related to present conditions. That said, without the crisis, and with more national experience of film distribution to draw on, Uruguay might have had its big international breakthrough film a few years earlier with *El viaje*. Instead, it had to wait for *Whisky*.

Whisky is the story of a middle-aged Jewish man, Jacobo Köller (Andrés Pazos). Jacobo is an isolated, expressionless character. He owns a small, outdated sock factory in Montevideo, at which the organizing force is the forewoman, Marta (Mirella Pascual). On the first anniversary of the death of Jacobo’s mother, his brother Herman (Jorge Bolani) visits to attend the laying of the tombstone ceremony (the *matzeiva*), taking time off from his own more prosperous sock factory in Brazil. During Herman’s visit, Marta agrees to perform the charade of being Jacobo’s wife. After the funeral, although it is off-season, the three characters visit the seaside resort of Piriápolis, a short drive along the coast from Montevideo, and there they encounter a young Argentine couple on their honeymoon. Herman gives Jacobo a large sum of money in compensation for the years he spent caring for their dying mother. Bored with Jacobo’s indifference to her, Marta spends the night with Herman. Jacobo gambles

his brother's money in the casino, hoping to lose it all, but in fact ends up winning, and gives the majority of the money to Marta. On returning to Montevideo, Marta decides to leave Jacobo's employ; for Jacobo life goes on as usual.

To an international audience, *Whisky* is an intelligent, character-driven black comedy about two very competitive adult brothers, briefly reunited by the death of their mother, and Marta, a likeable woman who reassesses her life and leaves behind years of routine for a chance at a different life. It is a story that can appeal to anyone, although its aesthetic is perhaps most easily recognizable to European art cinema lovers on the festival circuit, as was evidenced by the FIPRESCI Prize it received when it played in the 'Un Certain Regard' strand at Cannes. That the positive reception of *Whisky*, like *El viaje*, is due to its similarity to recognizable predecessors is borne out by reviews in *Variety* in the USA and *Sight and Sound* in the UK, which drew comparisons with the work of Finnish auteur Aki Kaurismäki.¹⁴ Again, universalizing clichés abound in its international reception, referring to a story of 'the human heart', and of 'ordinary life artfully and touchingly told'.¹⁵ Thus a major part of *Whisky*'s appeal is the access it provides international audiences to a seemingly 'un-nationally' specific story; the film's location does not get in the way of non-Uruguayan audiences' engagement. There are very few expansive exterior shots, a lack that contrasts with *El viaje*'s rather memorable panoramic shots of Uruguay's countryside. Instead, *Whisky* primarily consists of tightly framed interiors, and the few exteriors that do exist – such as Jacobo and Herman watching a football match – provide the viewer with only a partial view of the location.

Admittedly, Rebella and Stoll's previous film, *25 Watts*, displayed the same tight framing and intelligent use of interiors that are characteristic of much low-budget independent cinema. Yet whilst it is perhaps not so surprising that establishing shots of Uruguay's major metropolis, Montevideo, are absent from *Whisky* (as they do not have the same international currency as establishing shots of Rio, Manhattan, Paris or Tokyo), it is remarkable that very little is made of the dramatic seascape of Piriápolis. Using locations as apparently nondescript or pan-national as 'a factory', 'a flat', 'a football ground', 'a bakery', 'a seaside resort', and so on, helps to retain the film's universality of appeal. It reduces any potential feeling of alienation on the part of the international viewer, focusing them instead on the performances of the cast and unfolding story. For the uninitiated viewer, then, in *Whisky* the cinematography depicts Uruguay as a giant film set, a huge 'anywhere' location – akin to that in Michael Mann's Hollywood blockbuster *Miami Vice* (2006), in which a few square miles of Montevideo, Atlántida and Punta del Este stood in for Cuba, Miami, Colombia and even Geneva. Thus *Whisky* presents international audiences with a low-budget indie or art film, with a character-driven plot, sparse action, minimalist comic acting and tightly controlled cinematography. However, for Uruguayan audiences *Whisky* is immediately recognizable as a film about Uruguay. Although

14 Geoffrey Macnab, 'Whisky', *Sight and Sound*, vol. 16, no. 3 (2006), p. 92; Todd McCarthy, 'Whisky', *Variety*, 27 May 2004. <<http://www.variety.com/review/VE1117923987.html?categoryID=31&cs=1>> [accessed 5 July 2009].

15 Manohla Dargis, 'A tale of connections, tiny ones made and far greater ones lost forever', *The New York Times*, 3 March 2005. <<http://movies.nytimes.com/2005/03/03/movies/03whis.html>> [accessed 5 July 2009].

the film's main focus is on two Jewish brothers, it also meditates on Uruguayan identity in a way that may not be immediately apparent to an outsider.

Whisky uses its characters to place Uruguayan identity in the larger context of the Southern Cone, figuring the nation as a node of tourism and industry, a place through which money flows but does not necessarily stay. Herman arrives from Brazil, and he, Jacobo and Marta visit the tourist resort of Piriápolis and stay in the town's most impressive landmark, the Hotel Argentino – built in the 1930s to attract tourists and still boasting an extensive ground floor of lobby, cafe, casino, restaurant and swimming pool. Noticeably, the only other guests in the hotel are Argentine tourists on their honeymoons, representative of the hordes who cross the border each year to visit resorts along the coast. These different national characters are portrayed in a stereotypical manner familiar to South Americans, with cheerful characters hailing from Brazil and Argentina contrasting with dour Uruguayans Jacobo and Marta. The black comedy of the film is therefore knowingly encapsulated in the title, 'whisky' (the equivalent of 'cheese' for English-speaking photographic subjects), as the Uruguayan characters in this post-economic crisis film find very little to smile about until (and despite) the arrival of these wealthier outsiders from Brazil and Argentina.

Jacobo's stone-faced reaction to the money Herman offers him seems to be due to the fact that Herman left his family in Uruguay twenty years previously, to prosper in Brazil. Whilst Jacobo has remained in the country, suffering along with its economic decline, Herman escaped the dictatorship and economic crisis along with his family commitments. Now requiring new machinery that, unavailable in Uruguay, must come from Italy, Jacobo's fading business may well succumb to the Brazilian merger suggested by his brother.

However, just as the film does not entirely condemn Herman for his behaviour, neither does it side with the traumatized Jacobo either, ultimately portraying him as a childlike figure who rejects the adult desire of Marta and chooses instead not to develop beyond dependence on his now-dead mother. Uruguayan identity, then, exists somewhere in-between the two extremes of the absentee Herman and the martyrish Jacobo. Occupying this in-between space is Marta, who leaves Jacobo's factory at the end of the film, and – given her statement to Herman that if she had money she would visit Brazil – may well leave the country altogether.

In *Whisky*, Uruguayan identity is depicted increasingly as one which is in transit. This is most clearly figured as Herman leaves for Brazil at the end of the film. In the background of the shot, under the airport's 'Departures' sign, a young man is saying goodbye to his mother; he is draped in the Uruguayan flag, making an obvious statement about Uruguayan identity in the context of the flows of people and trade that traverse South America under the Common Market of the Southern Cone (MERCOSUR).

This exploration of a transitory identity explains the elasticity of time in the film. Characters throughout are caught in moments of intense boredom, with Jacobo especially being depicted sleeping, eating, reading or simply staring into space, whilst mealtimes are marked by pregnant pauses; when Jacobo and Marta share a hotel room, the awkwardness of their interactions is emphasized by a static camera and long take. These moments of dead time create a sense of waiting that pervades the film, as though Uruguay were a country in which something should be happening, but is not; were a country to pass through like a tourist, but not to stay in. In *El viaje*, the unconstrained nature of the countryside is matched by the leisurely way in which the characters journey to the sea. This temporal condition seems fitting in a post-dictatorship attempt to recoup the national past for the present, to 'go slowly' and, literally, take time to visit the past. *Whisky*, by contrast, a film made after the economic crisis in 2002, depicts a Uruguay that is confining in spatial terms but in which time seems to draw out endlessly as the nation awaits recuperation from its symbolically 'out of season' tourist resorts.

In this respect, the empty Piriápolis of *Whisky* stands in contrast to the depiction of the vibrant resort seen in *El viaje* in 1963. In *El viaje*, the juxtaposition of the merry movements and colours of the resort with the small, dusty town of Minas illustrates Uruguay's dual income-producing sectors – a productive countryside of cattle, wool and dairy for export and, in the early 1960s, an increasingly productive tourist industry. In 2004 in *Whisky*, however, the capital is in disrepair and gradual meltdown, Jacobo is unable to compete with his brother's Brazilian business, and the tourist industry waits, semi-dormant, for the influx of money that the next high season will bring from abroad. In this way, *Whisky* engages with political debates of the early 2000s, over Uruguay's future within the MERCOSUR, and the difficulties it faces competing industrially with Brazil and Argentina, weighed against the impossibility of maintaining the economy on a tourist-led services industry when the high season is limited to one or two months per year.

Although not all Uruguayan films follow the divide between national identity 'through the past' (first generation) and 'in the present' (second generation), these two films are representative of the two different directions of New Uruguayan Cinema. In this way, they are not dissimilar to the fifth- and sixth-generation Chinese directors, who are similarly divided by their emergence during or after the Cultural Revolution, and, accordingly, their respective focus on the national past or present.¹⁶

El viaje and *Whisky* are not isolated examples. Consider the difference between Arsuaga's *Otarío* and *Corazón de Fuego* and the second generation's *25 Watts* and *La Perrera*. *Otarío* is a noir period piece that returns to the golden age of the 1940s, while *Corazón de Fuego* is concerned with the need to preserve the pre-dictatorship past, as seen in the quaint desire of three elderly men to save Uruguay's last working

16 Dror Kochan, 'Wang Xiaoshuai', *Senses of Cinema*, September 2003. <<http://archive.sensesofcinema.com/contents/directors/03/wang.html>> [accessed 5 July 2009].

steam train from being sold to a Hollywood studio. These first-generation films stand in stark contrast to *25 Watts* and *La Perrera*, both of which are set in a present divorced from any informing past, and explore the growing pains of aimless young adults in the style of movies like *Clerks* (1994).

Yet in both cases, Uruguayan cinema is increasingly achieving a delicate balancing act between the national and international dimensions needed for a small national cinema to compete in the global marketplace.¹⁷ In such a context, fostering links with funding bodies and production sources outside Uruguay is essential. As Tamara L. Falicov notes – isolating the ‘structural asymmetries’¹⁸ of the South American marketplace and Uruguay’s limited internal market as causes – the national border-erasing potential of MERCOSUR has not paid dividends for Uruguayan coproduction deals. By contrast, Uruguayan cinema has prospered on funds from IBERMEDIA, the Spanish-based film finance pool modelled on MEDIA, whose member nations include Spain, Portugal and a number of South American nations.

Despite the potentially neocolonial implications of reliance on IBERMEDIA,¹⁹ and the ever-present danger of a loss of Uruguayan cinema’s distinctive identity due to coproductions and foreign finance,²⁰ across both generations there remains a concerted engagement with Uruguay, its identity, heritage and global position. *El viaje* received funds from home (FONA) and abroad (IBERMEDIA). Although it had to be sent to Buenos Aires for the addition of Dolby sound and the final cut of the negative²¹ – in this respect confirming the old cliché that Uruguay can be considered a province of Argentina – in fairness the same pull of the metropolis would be felt by regional filmmakers in Argentina as it was in Uruguay. This need for outside assistance, then, should not detract from the Uruguayan nature of the film’s production, from preproduction right through to the final cut (produced by Low Flying, a Uruguayan company that rents filming and editing equipment, often for adverts and international productions shooting on location) in Uruguay.

Rather, with this mix of funding the national is increasingly blended with the international. Post *Whisky* – which received international distribution, including theatrical and DVD releases in the US (Global Film Initiative) and UK (Artificial Eye) – Uruguayan films are achieving international acclaim by combining their focus on the nation with the ‘universally’ appealing ingredients required to be international hits in specific contexts of reception, especially the global festival and art cinema distribution circuits.²²

In turn, these international successes have impacted upon filmmaking in Uruguay. Although the economically depressed state is unable to conjure a fully funded industrial infrastructure overnight, small steps have been taken nonetheless. Film education is being consolidated through collaboration between the various film schools and universities,²³ suggesting that future generations of Uruguayan

17 Steve Neale, ‘Art cinema as institution’, in Catherine Fowler (ed.), *The European Cinema Reader* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 103–20, p. 117.

18 Falicov, ‘Film policy under MERCOSUR’, p. 42.

19 Tamara L. Falicov, ‘Programa Ibermedia: co-production and the cultural politics of constructing an Ibero-American audiovisual space’, *The Spectator*, vol. 27, no. 2 (2007), pp. 21–30, pp. 27–8.

20 Keith Richards, ‘Born at last? Cinema and social imaginary in 21st-century Uruguay’, in Lisa Shaw and Stephanie Dennison (eds), *Latin American Cinema: Essays on Modernity, Gender and National Identity* (Jefferson, NC and London: McFarland & Company, 2005), pp. 137–59, p. 157.

21 Interview with Guillermo Casanova.

22 For an analysis of this balancing act in relation to *El Baño del Papa*, see David Martin-Jones and Soledad Montañez, ‘Bicycle Thieves, or thieves on bicycles? *El Baño del Papa*’, *Studies in Hispanic Cinemas*, vol. 4, no. 3 (2008), pp. 183–98.

23 As discussed during the Primer Encuentro de Cine Nacional (The First Meeting on National Cinema) in July 2007.

- 24 EFE Latino, 'Uruguay estrena Ley de Cine con el objetivo de fortalecer sector audiovisual', *Soitu es*, 14 May 2008. <http://www.soitu.es/soitu/2008/05/14/info/1210782427_218201.html> [accessed 5 July 2009]; John Hecht and Brian Byrnes, 'Latin American spirit: a vibrant film sector is emerging', *Hollywood Reporter*, 17 May 2008. <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/hr/content_display/news/e317c5c16b2d6b9258e9517671f78f0b3fb> [accessed 5 July 2009].
- 25 Falicov, 'Film policy under MERCOSUR', pp. 37–8.
- 26 Richards, 'Born at last?', p. 137; Falicov, 'Film policy under MERCOSUR', p. 39.
- 27 Anon., 'Berlinale: "Gigante", de Adrián Biniez', *Screen Daily*, 8 February 2009. <<http://micropsia.blogspot.com/2009/02/berlinale-gigante-de-adrian-binie.html>> [accessed 5 July 2009].
- 28 Jay Weissberg, 'Gigante', *Variety*, 8 February 2009. <<http://www.variety.com/index.asp?layout=festivals&jump=review&id=2478&reviewid=VE1117939612&cs=1>> [accessed 5 July 2009].

filmmakers will be able to draw upon the experience of their predecessors. In 2007 elections were held to constitute the first Association of Producers and Filmmakers in Uruguay (Asociación Productores y Realizadores de Cine y Video del Uruguay), which included first-generation figures such as Guillermo Casanova and Enrique Fernández, and second-generation representatives Diego Fernández, and Fernando Epstein. Most importantly, however, in 2008 a new law was passed creating a production fund and establishing tax breaks for Uruguayan filmmakers,²⁴ bringing Uruguay in line with other South American film-producing countries.²⁵ In this gradually transforming context, apprentice filmmakers may no longer feel they are the first to make a film in Uruguay, as so many marketing taglines have suggested of previous films²⁶ – though this is less due to the poor memories of Uruguayan film distributors than it is to a savvy recognition that the majority of films have failed to perform beyond the nation. Most recently, due to the post-*Whisky* watershed, when *Gigante* played at the Berlinale in 2009, international critics immediately acknowledged that they were not seeing the first film ever produced in Uruguay, with *Screen Daily* and *Variety* noting writer/director Biniez's small part in *Whisky*,²⁷ and the role of the same production team – Control Z Films under the Executive Production of Epstein.²⁸ New Uruguayan Cinema may be a cinema in progress, but it finally 'exists'.

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DAVID TROTTER

By the late 1930s, in Britain, it was possible to be specific about film. In Patrick Hamilton's 1930 novel *The Midnight Bell*, Bob, a waiter in a pub, takes the barmaid Ella, who is in love with him, to the pictures to see her favourite actor, 'Richard Dix'. Absorbed into the audience, they immediately adopt the 'blank, calm, inhuman stare of the picture-goer'. First up is a feature called *The Gay Defender*, starring Richard Dix, which Ella likes; then 'a German film called *The Spy*' (Lang's *Spione* of 1928). "'This is *your* type, ain't it, Bob?'" said Ella at the appearance of the leading lady' (a 'large-eyed, slim and shingled blonde').¹ The filmgoer's blank, calm stare was no longer thought to be so inhuman that it could not distinguish between different kinds of film, or develop a range of intelligible responses. In Christopher Isherwood's 1939 story *Goodbye to Berlin*, the narrator customarily takes Sally Bowles to the movies as some small consolation for her latest sexual disappointment. 'We went to a little cinema in the Bülowstrasse, where they were showing a film about a girl who sacrificed her stage career for the sake of a Great Love, Home, and Children. We laughed so much that we had to leave before the end.' But when his posh friend Natalia asks him if he's seen René Clair's *Sous les toits de Paris* (1930), Sally is not about to be upstaged. '*She'd* seen the film, and thought it was marvelous, and wasn't Préjean marvelous, and did we remember the scene where a train goes past in the background while they're starting to fight?'² It was this scene Graham Greene had remembered, too, when reviewing Howard Hawks's *Barbary Coast* in *The Spectator* on 1 November 1935: 'the smoke blew continuously across, and the dialogue was drowned in the din of shunting trucks'.³ Absorption in the detail of filmmaking was sufficiently widespread in British middle-class culture – thanks largely to the efforts of reviewers like Greene – for novelists like Hamilton and Isherwood to feel completely at ease in poking gentle fun at it. The history of that absorption is the subject of Laura Marcus's highly impressive account of 'writing about cinema', mostly in Britain, and mostly in the period between the wars.

The first impression the book gives is of monumentality. Clearly, you think, as you haul it down from the library shelf or prise open the jiffy bag, there was a lot of writing about cinema in Britain between the wars. Marcus does like an epigraph. There are eight of them before you get to the Introduction, and then a further three as an overture to the first chapter. Indeed, the argument as a whole is in some measure epigraphic, in that it proceeds by the steady accumulation of weighty extracts from a wide range of commentaries on film, some of which elicit further commentary on the author's part, while others do not. It could perhaps even be considered para-epigraphic, since each chapter racks up well in excess of two hundred endnotes, a fair proportion of which consist of

1 Patrick Hamilton, *Twenty-Thousand Streets Under the Sky: a London Trilogy* (London: Hogarth Press, 1987), p. 86.

2 Christopher Isherwood, *The Berlin Novels* (London: Vintage, 1992), pp. 292, 435.

3 David Parkinson (ed.), *Mornings in the Dark: the Graham Greene Film Reader* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1993), p. 42.

extended quotation. I was at first disconcerted by this preponderance of extract, but the method begins to make powerful sense as soon as Marcus arrives, in the second chapter, at the heart of her matter: Bloomsbury and cinema. For at that point the steady accumulation becomes comprehensible as a network, with each item a node or switching-point.

For example, an illuminating analysis of the opening of the 1908 section of Virginia Woolf's 1937 saga-novel *The Years* directs us to the images of litter in Walter Ruttmann's *Berlin: Symphony of a City* (1927), and then to some brilliant remarks about rhythmic acceleration and deceleration in that film in Eric Walter White's *Parnassus to Let*, published by the Woolfs' Hogarth Press in 1928 (pp. 158–9). There are two pathways out of these remarks: one leads to an endnote containing useful information about White, an old friend of Thorold Dickinson (pp. 466–7); the other to Marcus's own subtle commentary on the extent to which White's terms 'resonate with' an observation about rhythm in film in a 1928 essay by Greene, whose emphasis on the wave of rhythm and on rhythm as a wave in turn 'chimes in significant ways' with Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (1927) and *The Waves* (1931) (p. 159). Of course, there is a certain looseness about the notions of resonance and chiming; here, however, they operate within a field constituted by the array of material (a great deal of it hitherto neglected) brought meticulously to light and set on the page. This is the most wide-ranging, detailed and authoritative account we yet have of the uses to which a major British novelist put her familiarity with cinema.

The Tenth Muse provides a compelling chronicle of a versatile and vivid 'engagement with some of the central dimensions of the film medium' (p. 178) on the part not only of (roughly speaking) modernist writers – from Villiers de l'Isle Adam and H.G. Wells through Rudyard Kipling and D.H. Lawrence to James Joyce, H.D., Woolf, Greene and Isherwood – but also of the first commentators willing and able to lay claim to the status of theorist. Some of the latter will be familiar to anyone who has spent any time with the history of early cinema; but many will not be, and therein lies the vindication of Marcus's epigraphic approach. To be sure, the approach falters occasionally. There is the odd lapse into bathos, as in the gargantuan endnote (pp. 482–3) brought about by a somewhat underwhelming remark by Anthony Vidler (p. 254). The 1930s, by which time people had actually started to go to the movies in novels by Hamilton, Isherwood and others, receive relatively short shrift. To that extent, Marcus could be said to have adhered to an unwritten rule in the scholarship on literary modernism, which states that the less explicit reference there is to the cinema in a text, the more 'cinematic' its methods must be. She has nonetheless explained, with unfailing clarity and discrimination, what novelists might reasonably have thought their readers would know about cinema; and how, if they did know about cinema, they came to know it.

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P. Adams Sitney, *Eyes Upside Down: Visionary Filmmakers and the Heritage of Emerson*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, 417 pp.

KIM KNOWLES

In a recent article in Jackie Hatfield's *Experimental Film and Video*, filmmaker–theorist Grahame Weinbren evokes the problematic nature of avant-garde film theory and criticism by drawing attention to the ‘power of a particular book’.¹ Published in 1974, this book – P. Adams Sitney's *Visionary Film*² – ‘changed the notion of independent filmmaking’ and, over thirty years later, ‘still hangs over the field’.³ Indeed, no other survey of avant-garde filmmaking, US or otherwise, has achieved such widespread acclaim, and slightly earlier studies of the same subject by Parker Tyler and Sheldon Renan have subsequently been overshadowed by Sitney's monolith.⁴ The secret to *Visionary Film*'s enduring success is partly its division of US avant-garde filmmaking into neatly distinct subgenres representing key trends in its complex development. The new vocabulary of terms, such as ‘mythopoeic’, ‘trance’, ‘lyrical’ and ‘structural’ film, not only allowed Sitney to concentrate on what he saw as the major themes running through the history of US independent cinema, but also went some way towards making the area much more accessible to film students and scholars alike. So whilst Sitney's system has since been heavily criticized for, as Weinbren points out, ‘erecting fences between filmmakers who belong in the same yard, and herding together some who ought to be kept fields apart’,⁵ he also established a tradition of formal engagement and aesthetic appreciation, the reverberations of which were felt way beyond his admittedly restricted US canon.

Eyes Upside Down continues Sitney's commitment to US avant-garde cinema in very much the same way as *Visionary Film* began it, and thus the book will probably do little to dissipate criticisms of the author's perceived limited approach. Although Sitney has expanded and updated his canon of ‘visionary’ filmmakers, the shadow of Stan Brakhage still looms large, effectively setting the parameters, if not exactly the tone, of the book as a whole. Whilst *Visionary Film* discussed the varied output of some thirty filmmakers, *Eyes Upside Down* is much more limited in this respect, reducing the corpus to the selected works of a mere eleven already well-respected figures of the US avant garde, very much reflecting the highly personal and poetic epic style established by Brakhage. However, as if in an attempt to offset the largely male-centred perspective of his earlier book, Sitney now welcomes the more contemporary practitioners Abigail Child and Su Friedrich into the canon of what he refers to as ‘our strongest filmmakers’ (p. 20).

Developing his interest in the relationship between film and literature, explored in his more recent *Modernist Montage*,⁶ Sitney uses as an analytical springboard the poetic aesthetics of the nineteenth-century US transcendentalist writer Ralph Waldo Emerson and his followers, notably

1 Grahame Weinbren, ‘Post future past perfect’, in Jackie Hatfield (ed.), *Experimental Film and Video: an Anthology* (Eastleigh: John Libbey, 2006), p. 5.

2 P. Adams Sitney, *Visionary Film: the American Avant-Garde* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1974).

3 Ibid., p. 6.

4 Parker Tyler, *Underground Film: a Critical History* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press), 1995; Sheldon Renan, *The Underground Film: an Introduction to its Development in America* (London: Studio Vista, 1967).

5 Weinbren, ‘Post future past perfect’, p. 6.

6 P. Adams Sitney, *Modernist Montage: the Obscurity of Vision in Cinema and Literature* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1990).

Walt Whitman. To provide a simple summary, Sitney's argument rests on the conviction that the eleven filmmakers discussed in the book follow Emerson's notion of Beautiful Necessity 'without knowing the source' (p. 8). Bringing together Emerson's metaphor of the transparent eyeball with George Olsen's 'inescapable centrality of the poet's body' (p. 16) and Whitman's soul-searching 'Song of Myself', this approach clearly privileges the autobiographical mode and, within that mode, the use of the film camera as an extension of the self. The focus here is that of vehicular motion, presenting a view of the world that reflects not only the movement of the body, but also the fluctuations of mood and feeling. The corporeal aesthetics of the 'somatic camera' found in the work of Marie Menken and Stan Brakhage are considered alongside Ian Hugo's 'tectonic' use of superimposition and Jonas Mekas's 'topographic cinema' as representative of what Sitney calls the 'crisis lyric', where the 'solitary filmmaker overwhelmed by awesome nature' (p. 253) uses the cinema as an 'instrument of discovery' (p. 393).

In developing these concepts, *Eyes Upside Down* moves through some complex terrain and requires that the reader possess at least a cursory knowledge of either domain if only to avoid occasionally becoming lost amongst the plethora of terms and references that crop up throughout the book's fairly long and detailed exegesis. As always, though, Sitney deftly brings together factual evidence, filmmaker commentaries and personal correspondence with his own penetrating insights into the films themselves, with which he is clearly intimately acquainted. The exhaustive analysis to which each film is submitted sometimes has the effect of explaining away each and every detail of the works, plunging into a single oeuvre and slowly unravelling its personal, mythological and cultural significance with an almost obsessive precision. Sitney's project becomes as epic as the works he interrogates, and the serial development of the chapters (reflecting that of the films) leave one hungry for variety, not to mention wondering how all this relates to the wider heterogeneous spectrum of US avant-garde filmmaking. Needless to say, Sitney rarely reflects on such questions, while the subject of digital filmmaking and the now very pertinent questions of digital technology, obsolescence and immateriality are conspicuously absent from his considerations, even though they are not wholly unrelated to the issues he raises.

The discourse surrounding avant-garde film practice has changed drastically since 1974, reflecting more general shifts in the way the medium is perceived and theorized, particularly within the context of new technologies and hybrid cinematic forms. In maintaining his Romanticist emphasis on a cinema of introspection and the eternal quest for self enlightenment, Sitney, as he openly admits in his conclusion, largely bypasses the complex social and political questions raised by the works. For these reasons, and in light of the criticisms levelled against Sitney in the wake of *Visionary Film*, *Eyes Upside Down* is unlikely to exert the same influence over the field as his earlier book. Nonetheless,

his longstanding status as one of the foremost commentators on the field, his extensive knowledge and passion for the subject, not to mention the at times staggering depth of insight that he brings to the films, will no doubt assure the book a privileged position alongside current literature on the history and aesthetics of US avant-garde cinema.

doi:10.1093/screen/hjp016

Martine Beugnet, *Cinema and Sensation: French Film and the Art of Transgression*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007, 192 pp.

EMMA WILSON

In Pascale Ferran's 2006 adaptation *Lady Chatterley*, the relations between the lovers are explored through minute attention to a series of tactile, impressionable surfaces. As Parkin holds Constance's shoe in his hand and undoes its button, we see the slight wrinkling of her stocking, its surface not quite stretched tight over her ankle. When he releases her suspender, we see the impression the fastening has left in the soft cotton, the slight damage to the fabric. The camera is close enough for us to see – and by implication to feel – the contrast of the not quite moulding fabric and the skin beneath. The pulling back of the stocking conjures, in equal measure, the sensation of flesh freed from fabric and the pleasure in viewing pale, untouched thighs. Writing about *Lady Chatterley* in the epilogue to her fine volume, *Cinema and Sensation*, Martine Beugnet concludes: 'This is about desire, and consumed physical desire and yet neither the relationship of the lovers nor that of the camera and filmmaker to the subjects and objects that make up the filmic matter is one of appropriation or exploitation' (p. 178).

Cinema and Sensation achieves a seamless intermingling of theoretical enquiry and film analysis, allowing film and theory to shape and inflect each other. For viewers of French film of the last decade, *Cinema and Sensation* offers a subtle accompaniment and guide. Such demanding and considered criticism of very recent film is rare. Beugnet draws together those films from France in the last decade that most startled and moved their viewers, and that most freely rethought the relation of narrative and sensation to filmmaking art. Beugnet has written previously on the films of Claire Denis (amongst other subjects), hazarding connections between Denis's works and a contemporary French 'cinema of abjection', including the films of Bruno Dumont, Gaspard Noé, Philippe Grandrieux and Catherine Breillat. These are the directors whose films make up the matter of *Cinema and Sensation* and are aligned with works by Vincent Dieutre, Chantal Akerman, Arnaud des Pallières, Bertrand Bonello, Agnès Varda and others. Beugnet makes space in her volume for open, sensory evocations of the experience of viewing the films of these directors: this is part of the ethos of her book and her means of paying attention to these works. She begins the volume

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with description of two sequences: the opening of *Sombre*, by Philippe Grandrieux, and its conjuring of a scene of sensational, sensate spectatorship; and the opening of *Leçons de ténèbres*, by Vincent Dieutre, with its sensory grazing of a painting by Caravaggio. As these labile, proximate analyses proliferate through the book, one of its strong effects is to demonstrate the force and innovation in French filmmaking currently and the ways in which such films are demanding new modes of engagement.

Beugnet's volume offers, further, a means of theorizing these new modes of engagement and thus of extending and applying her insights beyond French cinema. *Cinema and Sensation* moves in the current of those influential works, by Laura Marks and others, which have sought to bring the senses and sensation into thought about cinema. Beugnet enters into dialogue with Marks, whilst also drawing in other innovative voices on film, thought and the body, notably theoretical work by French critics Nicole Brenez and Jérôme Game. Distinctively Beugnet roots her thinking about cinema and sensation in debates about early cinema, looking back in particular to Artaud, his call for a "'third" kind of film form' (p. 22), and his bid for the immersion of spectators in the world created by the film. Beugnet follows Artaud, and makes substantial use of Deleuze too, in her theorization of the involvement of the mind and the senses, and of the ways in which the sensate materiality of film can launch new modes of thought and means of engagement with the world. She argues, for example, with relation to Grandrieux and Dieutre that 'By grounding their exploration of the shadowy recesses of the human psyche in the material dimension of their medium, [they] can exploit cinema's specific faculty to generate contradictory effects: merge the fearful and the pleasurable, the abject and the sublime, and affect us viscerally as well as intellectually' (p. 7). Beugnet, in line with other Deleuzian readers of film, looks beyond the bounds of the individual human subject, form or psyche. As she says, 'when cinema becomes a cinema of the senses it starts to generate worlds of mutating sounds and images that often ebb and flow between the figurative and the abstract, and where the human form, at least as a unified entity, easily loses its function as the main point of reference' (p. 65). She rigorously follows the implications of her theoretical positionings in her readings, responding to the sensory triggers of the films under analysis, to the 'multi-sensory evocations', 'blocks of colour' and 'bright small touches' (p. 79) in *Nénette et Boni* or to the 'blurring and trembled images caught in hand-held camera, superimpositions, graininess and low contrasts' (p. 119) of *Adieu*. For Beugnet, these sensory manipulations in the medium 'conjure up the changing densities of the real in which the human form is caught' (p. 119).

Threads of ideas are traced across the volume as the demands of the subject call up discussion of those modes and genres that have yielded a cinema of sensation. The nomadic and exilic, as modes of thought if not of experience, subtend the work. Where Marks associates the

intercultural with the haptic and links her discussions of memory and the senses to the experience of displacement and loss, Beugnet illustrates her argument with films drawn from a single national context, that nevertheless themselves exceed any fixed frames of reference. Beugnet moves from extreme cinema, through pornocracies, to horror and its conjuring of 'the unbearable that cannot be wished away' (p. 46). Other critics might have lingered longer over the ethics of such intermittently damaging cinema, in addition to its sensory and intellectual acuity, but this would be a different line of enquiry. Beugnet is an unflinching viewer, and her boldness, combined with her evident pleasure in the works she discusses, makes for much of the exhilaration of the volume. *Cinema and Sensation* offers new and elastic contact with French cinema, as it also awakens new thought through the senses.

doi:10.1093/screen/hjp020

Nurith Gertz and George Khleifi, *Palestinian Cinema: Landscape, Trauma, and Memory*. Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008, 256 pp.

Lina Khatib, *Lebanese Cinema: Imagining the Civil War and Beyond*. London and New York, NY: IB Tauris, 2008, 224 pp.

Rasha Salti (ed.), *Insights into Syrian Cinema: Essays and Conversations with Contemporary Filmmakers*. New York, NY: AIC Film Editions/Rattapallax Press, 2006, 189 pp.

KAY DICKINSON

'History has forgotten our people', write Nurith Gertz and George Khleifi in the first line of *Palestinian Cinema: Landscape, Trauma and Memory*, directly quoting the political scientist Yazid Sayigh. The same assertion, in different permutations, is repeated regularly throughout the Levantine countries covered by these three books: Palestine, Lebanon and Syria. The trouble, though, is not so much that the world rarely hears about the region (we are updated with sharp regularity), but that the coverage is considered prejudicial, historically inaccurate and harmful, and that current geopolitics stymies basic rights such as cultural expression and its dissemination. As a result, all four writers share an aspiration to redress this balance, struggling valiantly against dominant presumptions and blockages to do so. And one consequence of how this partial and fragmented data functions ideologically is that it places the authors within an unfortunate reality: to twist the Sayigh quotation, their people (most people, in fact) have also forgotten this region's *film* history.

The most pressing objective of the three books, then, is to address how these gaps and grievances interlink, with film history embodying a small subset of a more pervasive marginalization process. In rebuilding an archive of knowledge about Levantine cinema, they also chart the reasons why that archive has remained so long in ruins. Understanding

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the lie of the land, as these books enable us to do, also allows us to appreciate how resourceful the authors have been in producing such studies. Movies in this part of the world are not made under what many of us might consider 'normal' conditions, nor, as these books' subjects and methodologies evince, is Levantine film scholarship.

Firstly, we have to take into consideration the prolonged states of emergency law or lawlessness that Lebanon, Syria and Palestine have experienced recently. Incessant warfare or its prospect, the authors note, vividly colour narrative preoccupations, leading Lina Khatib to conclude in *Lebanese Cinema* that the Civil War has proved the most resounding theme. Likewise, these circumstances have strongly influenced how funding is assured, be it from the PLO or the Red Cross. In addition, historical crises readily divert resources away from cinema, as well as actually destroying what little of it has been made. The now-vanished Palestinian national moving image archive, Gertz and Khleifi detail, may have been bombed or misplaced on its exilic journeys out of its homeland; either way, it no longer exists. With few films from the region commercially available, minuscule numbers of prints struck and many more still missing in action (whole generations have been lost), these are difficult situations from which to start work.

As a consequence, the authors' strategies for compiling a written archive have been necessarily and successfully resourceful; redressing Sayigh's complaint, all three books turn their attentions to history as told by 'the people'. Most obviously, this means interviews with directors, but also accounts related by other film personnel, including, in *Palestinian Cinema*, a newsstand vendor who was once an extra in a 1940s movie. Stock theoretical frameworks are deployed – a hint of Agamben for Khatib, a smattering of Bhabha for Gertz and Khleifi – but the real emphasis is on allowing those involved to tell their own stories. Rasha Salti's anthology, *Insights into Syrian Cinema: Essays and Conversations with Contemporary Filmmakers*, not only includes interviews and the odd more academically-inclined essay, but also imagined movie scripts, diaries and journalism, peppering the text with a more poetic flavour than the average scholarly compilation. The book is almost entirely a work of translation from Arabic (as well as some French), displaying Salti's remarkable flair for transporting ideas across languages. Within these pages, it is easy to rekindle a nostalgia for a seemingly cooled project of enlivening English-speaking film studies through sustained reference to intellectual discussions happening beyond its borders, something that was central to *Screen's* impact in the 1970s.

But what comes from drawing together these sorts of materials? In *Lebanese Cinema*, the net result is one of the first detailed and reliable pictures of an industry: its economic vicissitudes, its modes of funding (state, private and overseas) and its regulation (censorship practices are fully described), alongside its key narrative themes of memory, social

and religious breakdown and debates about gender, all largely viewed through the lens of warfare. Khatib's aim appears to be providing a clear overview and, in privileging this perspective, she admirably avoids the minefields of so-called sectarianism that clearly rupture the Lebanese landscape.

Salti's agenda is somewhat different. Starting with her own thorough and comprehensive chronicle of Syrian cinema history, the book then consciously deviates into more personalized and unmediated accounts delivered by key directors. Through these she unveils the frustrations of working in that country's industry – although the emphasis on autobiography may seem slightly too self-involved for some readers. Such a trained judgement, however, would entail overlooking the richness of a particularly Syrian mode of delivery: one which privileges storytelling that alludes to the general by way of the exemplary particular and which, at the same time, cannot extract the individual from the social. All this is an entirely apt and creative repercussion of and response to a country under a specific type of leadership known for making research activity a somewhat exasperating experience. In the end, these conditions render Salti's diligent assemblage of a written archive both more impressive and refreshingly idiosyncratic.

Lastly, *Palestinian Cinema* is also framed around the oeuvre of noteworthy directors, giving us a meticulous picture of creative conditions under conflict in the region. Each auteur figure is drawn upon to represent different, broader aspects of the Palestinian experience that are illuminated by a close practical knowledge of this work (Khleifi is a well-established figure in Palestinian filmmaking) and insightful and historically informed textual analyses.

In fact, all three books benefit from detailed descriptions of the films they discuss, and not simply in order to leave the reader (who will probably never access most of these movies) less in the dark. Beyond the need to explain what they are talking about, the authors comprehend well the urgency of scrutinizing the recurrent patterns emerging and disappearing from their archives. Levantine cinema has too often, as we have seen, been threatened with expurgation from inside and out, and requires careful cataloguing in case of future damage. It is also, the writers reveal, a unique repository for matters hastily swept aside by official *local* histories. For Khatib, cinema functions as a space for unpacking often unspoken traumas and even prophesying the future; for Gertz and Khleifi, it details a lost homeland, using vivid reenactment to help create a blueprint for contemporary national struggle.

These erasures and fixations in Levantine film culture owe much to, and are fundamentally shaped by, the huge exilic movements of refugees around and out of the region, as well as the dominant Arab nationalisms of the past sixty or so years. Here Palestine looms large, almost as frequently in Syrian cinema as in its own. In the eyes of Gertz and Khleifi, Palestine is both territory and symbol, each as mutable as the

other. When the former is encroached upon, the latter is rejuvenated and resituated in ever more mercurial and complex ways by directors like Elia Suleiman. Syria's solidarity with the Palestinian cause, some contributors to *Insights into Syrian Cinema* insinuate, is a much safer and more condoned political discussion point than questioning internal policy might prove. In this respect, the critique of Israel is positively encouraged by the state, just as it was in late 1960s and early 1970s work from within Palestine, when the political organs were more thoroughly involved in production and rendered cinema's *raison d'être* almost exclusively that of popular resistance.

Therefore, in dealing so squarely with 'the national', these three books debate universal dilemmas about who should support cinema and under what terms. Salti's and Gertz and Khleifi's thinking, focused as it is around the interplay between the national and the individual, presents us with the conundrum of how people make movies in relation to the state, something that Khatib considers most clearly when she outlines Lebanese censorship laws. As director Oussama Mohammad points out in his witty and eloquent essay for *Insights into Syrian Cinema*, his country's not-for-profit, nationalized industry allows him enormous creative and occupational indulgences, whilst, at the same time, bureaucratically causing the Syrian oeuvre to be practically inaccessible to the rest of the world. Further south in the Levant, Palestine has witnessed a total relinquishment of most state-like support, opening it up to a market of individual competition for cofunding and NGO-sponsored contracts that has dramatically changed its content.

These are countries whose populations are too small and too preoccupied to guarantee profitable audience returns, a response in no way exclusive to this region. Ultimately, these writers are asking a truly crucial question for us all: how is marginal cinema paid for and to what extent should it be beholden to its benefactors? In this respect, *Lebanese Cinema*, *Palestinian Cinema* and *Insights into Syrian Cinema* extend well beyond niche interests in a body of films which, for reasons that warrant further debate, few English-speaking readers will ever experience. They deal with the highly topical and thorny issue of culture's place within a globalized and capitalist-dominated mode of exchange, and do so from the position of those on the rawer end of such machinations. The history that these books outline for us and entreat us not to forget is, in the end, of course our own, whether through constant exilic interaction (through refugees, through cinema's own migrant status) or through the English-speaking world's insistent intervention in this region. These three books invite us all to interact with this territory differently.

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David Murphy and Patrick Williams, *Postcolonial African Cinema: Ten Directors*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007, 272 pp.

Andrea Khalil (ed.), *North African Cinema in a Global Context: Through the Lens of Diaspora*. New York, NY and London: Routledge, 2008, 116 pp.

ROY ARMES

These two recently published books allow us to appreciate the wide range of current approaches to filmmaking in Africa and to see the diverse ways in which 'African cinema' is currently conceived.

David Murphy and Patrick Williams both teach at British universities, and Murphy is already well known for his study of Ousmane Sembene and for his work in running Edinburgh's annual 'Africa in Motion' festival. Their book, which includes discussion of the work of Youssef Chahine (Egypt), Flora Gomes (Guinea-Bissau), Moufida Tlatli (Tunisia) and Darrell James Roodt (South Africa), is a clear attempt to move beyond the simplistic equation too often found in the work of French critics, whereby 'African cinema' is equated with filmmaking from Francophone West Africa. Nevertheless, six of their ten chosen filmmakers do come from this region, with its unique experience of postcolonialism – not least in terms of French support for its filmmaking.

The introduction to the work of these ten filmmakers is an extremely useful and concise survey of many of the issues raised by African filmmaking, in which the authors give generous acknowledgement to the work of others in the field. Their focus is explicitly the auteur tradition of fictional feature filmmaking, which means that they ignore not only recent developments in video production (in Ghana and especially in Nigeria, where thousands of video features have been produced), but also, to a large extent, the continent's only two long-established film industries, those in South Africa and Egypt. Yet these latter, with their very different production and distribution strategies, have together produced over eighty per cent of all African feature films. Apart from Chahine, all of whose films since *Adieu Bonaparte* in 1985 have been French coproductions, the sole filmmaker considered by Murphy and Williams, who works within true industrial structures, is Darrel Roodt, who has directed in both South Africa and Hollywood. Roodt is an odd inclusion, since no effort is made to argue the case for him as an auteur and his films receive only lukewarm support (in sharp contrast to the well-merited praise accorded to his francophone contemporaries).

The authors do attempt to explore the possible disjunction between the kind of auteur filmmaking with which they are concerned and 'popular cinema', particularly in the chapter on the work of Idrissa Ouédraogo from Burkina Faso. But oddly they do not explore the necessary economic underpinning of this system, namely the way in which foreign funding, which is crucial where indigenous box-office earnings may be minimal, is invariably given on the basis of a proposal or script submitted by an individual filmmaker. In particular, they underplay (with just a

single sentence) the crucial role of French government policies in the creation of this kind of auteur cinema across Africa and beyond. There are numerous channels (both national and regional) through which the French give support to African filmmaking, not only to production, but also to a film's subsequent existence (festival screenings, distribution and archiving). To take just one example, the Fonds Sud funding scheme has supported films by all the directors dealt with here (with the exception of Roodt) – on four separate occasions each in the case of Gomes and Ouédraogo. With French Fonds Sud funding alone going to 143 films made in twenty-nine different African countries during the first twenty years of the fund's existence (1984–2004), there is an argument, which the authors do nothing to counter, that such films are indeed examples of an African cinema of which France is the principal producer, consumer and beneficiary (in terms of the cultural prestige accorded to a very loosely defined 'francophone' sphere of international film production, which paradoxically includes Chahine's Arab-language films and Gomes's Portuguese ones, as well as works in Bambara or Wolof).

Murphy and Williams set themselves three specific goals. The first, 'to give a sense of the evolution of African cinema', is only partially fulfilled, because they have not chosen any filmmaker who has made his or her feature debut in the last dozen or more years (their last is Moufida Tlatli, whose first feature appeared in 1994). This means they have missed the whole generation of filmmakers from francophone West Africa and the Maghreb born since independence (over fifty filmmakers, eight of them women) and also the renewal of South African cinema exemplified by filmmakers like Ramadan Suleman and Ntshavheni Wa Luruli (both supported, incidentally, by the French Fonds Sud). Their second stated aim, 'to represent as wide a geographical sample as possible', is better realized, but the inclusion of Roodt breaks the pattern. He is not in their sense of the term an auteur, and the discussion of his work gets lost in the complexities of defining 'South African' cinema, which the choice of a filmmaker who is part of post-apartheid South Africa would have avoided. But in their third aim, 'to represent a broad range of approaches to cinematic expression', they succeed totally.

The individual chapters which make up the bulk of the book are, for the most part, excellent, clearly written introductions to the work of directors whose films fully deserve this kind of detailed examination. The authors are particularly good at locating a key way into the filmmaker's work: Youssef Chahine's 'outsider' status in terms of Egyptian cinema (as a Lebanese-Greek Christian educated at an English-language college) or Med Hondo's passion for social justice (as grandson of a slave). More important still are the sympathetic and insightful examinations of key films, backed up by discussions of relevant critical and theoretical issues. This is a work that can be wholeheartedly recommended to those wishing to teach, or explore personally, aspects of African filmmaking.

For Murphy and Williams, the nationality of the filmmakers – in terms of birth or claimed identity – is largely unproblematic, regardless of the

filmmaker's current place of residence or the source of production finance. Andrea Khalil, on the other hand, looks at her chosen North African filmmakers from a very different perspective, seeing them as all 'part of the Maghebri diaspora' travelling 'back and forth between Europe and North America and their North African origins' and looking 'at each shore of the globe's waters with the other shore already printed on their field of vision'. The filmmakers chosen for discussion by her and her contributors include some of the most significant figures in the history of filmmaking in the Maghreb: Nouri Bouzid, Merzak Allouache and Nabil Ayouch (all three of whom have received Fonds Sud funding), as well as two of the more interesting and controversial of the younger filmmakers, Nadir Moknèche and Laila Marrakchi (who have both received aid from the French Centre National Cinématographique).

In his introductory essay, Kevin Dwyer takes Morocco, whose filmmakers receive comprehensive and reliable government support for their activities, as his example of the current vulnerability of all small national cinemas. Moroccan cinema has many internal features which might ensure its emergence onto the world stage: a fifty-year history of filmmaking, a current generation of filmmakers able to engage the attention of Moroccan audiences (in 2006 the top three films in terms of both audiences and box-office receipts were Moroccan), a widening recruitment of younger filmmakers, including far more women directors, and a marked loosening of censorship constraints. Yet, as Dwyer points out, the wider international context of world trade agreements and the fragility of the so-called 'cultural exception' (which would allow governments to support their own national film production) make the future prospects of Moroccan cinema at best 'ambiguous'.

In the context of the relationship of Morocco and the wider world, Brian T. Edwards offers an interesting analysis of *Marock*, Laila Marrakchi's highly controversial first feature, which offers a fictionalized portrait of her own life in upper-class Casablanca during the year before she left in 1997 at the age of nineteen to study and live in France. Edwards argues that although the characters' own aspirations will take them towards Paris, the film is best seen not as an example of postcolonial concerns but as representative of the more recent system of globalization, or what he prefers to call 'the age of circulation'. He is sensitive to the film's Hollywood 'look', to the way it recycles the concerns and narrative patterns of the US 'teen pic', and notes that 'America plays a major, if imagined and silent, presence in the film'. The film is clearly intended as an allegory of the nation, with a title 'which plays on the French name for Morocco, adding a "k" to suggest contemporaneity via the reference to rock music'. This places it, Edwards suggests, not within 'postcolonialism' but in a context where postcolonialism may be 'considered a temporary stage which has been succeeded by something else'.

Several of the contributors are concerned with issues of sexual identity. Not surprisingly, Robert Lang treats Nouri Bouzid's *Bezness* too

as a national allegory of Tunisia, in that the tourist industry on which the film focuses 'represents the neoglobal grip of free-market capitalism on Tunisia's destiny'. This destiny does not stem simply from French colonization, but is one shared with all third-world countries, 'in that, precisely, the supreme unifying force of contemporary history is now global'. Lang's analysis rightly underlines the importance of Bouzid's position within what he describes as 'Tunisian cinema's singularity', namely 'its willingness – unusual in an Arab society – to present the allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society in the private, individual terms of sexuality'. In a similar manner, Andrea Khalil's own piece on 'The myth of masculinity in the films of Merzak Allouache' looks at three key films – *Omar Gatlato*, *Bab el-Oued City* and *Chouchou* – all of which focus on 'the image of Algerian masculinity and the way masculine desire is informed by discourses of political and religious ideologies'. Khalil's analyses fully justify her claim that Allouache (resident in France since the making of *Bab el-Oued City*) is 'seeking freedom *from* tradition, not freedom *through* tradition'. Because Allouache is close both to the cultural and political elite and to western culture, he condemns Islam as *the* defining element of a 'backward' culture: 'positing tradition as the source of oppression and injustice, his point of view is cut off from the grassroots of Algerian and Arab society'.

Nadir Moknèche and Nabil Ayouch, the other two filmmakers considered, have paradoxical positions in Magrebian filmmaking. Moknèche, who was born in Paris in 1965 but returned to Algiers at the age of one month and was brought up there till the age of nineteen, is generally regarded as a *beur*, because his films have been funded through the normal mechanisms of low-budget French national production and use French-language dialogue, even when filmed in Algeria. By contrast Ayouch, who was born of mixed French and Moroccan parentage in Paris, where he was brought up and had his initial production base, is regarded as unequivocally 'Moroccan', because his early films all received aid through the government system operated by the CCM in Rabat. Both filmmakers, in the films discussed here, deal with marginalized characters. Ayouch's *Ali Zaoua* focuses on a group of street children in Casablanca, and Josef Gugler gives a clear account of the difficulties involved in using players who were actually living on the streets when Ayouch met them. Gugler stresses the softening effect of presenting their stories as part of a fictional narrative with engaging characters, but seems less convinced than other critics (the present writer included) by the inclusion of fantasy sequences which bring out the surreality hidden beneath the reality of the children's plight and make this a film to rank alongside Luis Buñuel's *Los olvidados*.

Hakim Abderrezak explores the complexities of the narrative strategy, adopted by Moknèche in his first two films, *Le harem de Mme Osmane* and *Viva Laldjérie*, of depicting small communities of women, united under the leadership of a mature dominant woman. As the title of the first

film indicates, the filmmaker's intention is to offer a modern parody-inversion of the traditional Oriental harem: a woman, not a man, is in charge, and the inmates have full control over the thoroughly modern (not to say western) activities that occur within, in Abderrezak's listing: 'prostitution, homosexuality, alcohol and liberated sexuality'. No moral judgment is brought to bear on these necessarily marginalized women, and the films depict 'an Algeria which, with the impetus of women and despite all the hurdles, transgresses taboos, engages a new way of life and fights against numerous obstacles'. The intention to offer these 'modern harems' as allegories of the Algerian nation is overt (the lead character in Moknèche's similarly structured third feature, *Délice Paloma*, is even called 'Madame Aldjéria'), but this is an image which many Algerian critics find difficult to accept.

Together these two volumes serve to make one aware of the polarity characteristic of the work of all African filmmakers, not simply those from the Maghreb. On the one hand, there are the childhood and ancestral memories so well brought out by Murphy and Williams in their accounts of the backgrounds and early shaping influences of their chosen ten filmmakers. On the other, there is the involvement of all African filmmakers, well brought out by Khalil, with foreign markets and an increasingly globalized culture.

doi:10.1093/screen/hjp021

Paul Cooke (ed.), *World Cinema's 'Dialogues' with Hollywood*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, 272 pp.

PAUL SUTTON

The title to this volume of essays presents the reader with an entirely intentional definitional conundrum, for the descriptive categories 'World Cinema' and 'Hollywood' are notoriously difficult to pin down. The collection's editor, Paul Cooke, offers a number of potentially very useful definitions in his introduction, definitions that are then themselves subject to 'dialogue' as the fourteen essays contained within this book address, through case studies, the viability and accuracy of these introductory offerings. One early account, attributed to the University of Leeds's Centre for World Cinemas, of which Cooke is a member, asserts that 'the volume takes world cinema to mean "cinema of the world", in which Hollywood is one part amongst many, albeit a cinema that has played a hugely significant role in shaping the history of the medium' (p. 8). The effect of the above definition is to move away from the divisive opposition between centre and periphery that more usually describes the relationship of Hollywood to the cinemas of the rest of the world. In this account Hollywood is put in its proper place, accounting 'for "approximately only six per cent of total film production in the world"' (p. 7), against, for example, Asia's fifty per cent.

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The book is organized chronologically, with chapters covering both the expected topics, such as the relationship between German Expressionism and Hollywood and the Soviet response to Hollywood in the 1920s and 1930s, and the rather more unexpected, such as Catherine O'Rawe's excellent exploration of MGM's 1932 adaptation of Pirandello's 1930 play *Come tu mi vuoi* and Lisa Shaw's fascinating study of Hollywood's appropriation of the Brazilian *Baiana* costume and its subsequent reappropriation in the Brazilian *chanchadas* or low-budget musical comedies of the 1950s.

Given the continued dominance of Hollywood film on many undergraduate film programmes, a number of chapters offer up interesting challenges to this institutional orthodoxy. Julian Stringer and Qiong Yu's exploration of the Chinese 'event movie' *Hero* (Zhang Yimou, 2002), seen critically as heralding the emergence of the specifically Chinese blockbuster (as competitor and threat to Hollywood) raises important questions that impact on critical writing on the cinema more generally. Taking issue with the predominance of the auteur model in film studies and focusing on the technical personnel often overlooked in discussions of individual films, Stringer and Yu argue that *Hero* is not so much a Chinese film as an 'international product' (p. 248). *Hero* is the product of visible Chinese artists such as Zhang Yimou and the film's star Jet Li as much, and just as importantly, as it is of the invisible US technicians such as visual effects coordinator Charlie Armstrong and sound editor Steve Burgess. Given that many of these US technicians have also worked on projects around the globe, Stringer and Yu wonder precisely 'where or what "Hollywood" is' (p. 248). Of course, one only has to look at the conglomeration and diversification that has characterized the Hollywood studios since the 1960s to arrive at the same question, as many scholars have indeed already done.¹

Rob Stone's finely nuanced discussion of Richard Linklater's *Before Sunrise* (1995) and *Before Sunset* (2004) seeks to refute the popular binary "Hollywood equals popular culture" versus "non-Hollywood equals high culture" (p. 3), the mainstream versus arthouse dichotomy, by arguing that against the 'homogenisation of European film culture by Hollywood' (p. 223) there must be a greater recognition of the significance of art cinema in America. Stone argues that Linklater's two films, 'corrective[s] to the studio-sponsored auteurist cults of so-called independent American filmmakers' (p. 223), dramatize the international tensions that often characterize the relationship between Hollywood and European cinema, the truncated romance between a French woman and an American man analogous to 'the cycle of attraction and estrangement that characterizes the relationship between American and European cinema' (p. 233). The dialogue between Jesse (Ethan Hawke) and Céline (Julie Delpy) in the film is read in optimistic terms by Stone, who argues that the 'common ground . . . of emotional response' (p. 234) within the film may extend to communication and dialogue in the common ground between Europe and Hollywood.

1 See, for example, Thomas Schatz, 'The return of the Hollywood studio system', in Erik Barnouw et al. (eds), *Conglomerates and the Media* (New York, NY: New Press, 1998), pp. 73–106; Tino Balio, 'Adjusting to the new global economy: Hollywood in the 1990s', in Albert Moran (ed.), *Film Policy: International, National and Regional Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 23–38, and "A major presence in all of the world's markets": the globalisation of Hollywood in the 1990s', in Steve Neale and Murray Smith (eds), *Contemporary Hollywood Cinema* (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 58–73.

Rachael Hutchinson explores the remake in her exploration of Sergio Leone's refashioning of Akira Kurosawa's *Yojimbo* (1961). Leone's *A Fistful of Dollars* (1964) is undeniably similar to Kurosawa's film, featuring, as Hutchinson notes, 'the same story, characters and even dialogue' (p. 173); however, despite these similarities Hutchinson is keen to move beyond the 'fidelity discourse' and 'remake theory' that she argues has characterized academic work on remakes. Proposing instead a model based on appropriation and dialogue, Hutchinson argues that both *Yojimbo* and *A Fistful of Dollars* can be seen to be appropriating and dialoguing with the conventions of their respective genres, both within national contexts and in relation to Hollywood, specifically the Hollywood Western. While such an approach may move beyond the limitations of earlier models, there is a danger, Hutchinson asserts, that in remake pairings the appropriated becomes subject to the power of the appropriator and is as such marginalized. Thus Hutchinson argues that 'while the appropriation model is still far more useful and positive than fidelity discourse and remake theory, its fundamental binary structures may lead to an Orientalist misreading [of *Yojimbo*] in relation to Hollywood and the wider film genre' (p. 176). As a counter to this, Hutchinson stresses the focus on the liminal that characterizes the plots of both films and extrapolates from this a potential model for the analysis of international remakes. It is the very 'liminality' of these films that allows Hutchinson to 'hope that studies of world cinema in terms of genre and dialogue might be a way to overcome the national-cinema problems of appropriation discourse' (p. 185).

For researchers, lecturers and students alike this text will offer productive ways into debates around world cinema, national cinemas and Hollywood while also providing useful historical contextualizations of certain key moments in film history, explored not simply as moments in a national cinema history but as developments in a broader, global film history. This collection is a rich and welcome addition to a burgeoning body of research that has taken the relationship between the constituents of world cinema as its subject matter.

doi:10.1093/screen/hjp025

Gönül Dönmez-Colin, *Turkish Cinema: Identity, Distance and Belonging*. London: Reaktion Books, 2008, 268 pp.

Rekin Teksoy, *Turkish Cinema*, trans. Martin K. Thomen and Özde Çeliktemel. İstanbul: Oğlak Yayıncılık ve Reklamcılık, 2008, 189 pp.

LAURENCE RAW

Cinema as an art form was established in Turkey as long ago as 1896, when the first picture houses opened in the cosmopolitan area around Pera in İstanbul (now known as Beyoğlu). The industry grew up around

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one particular street – Yeşilçam (The Green Pine) – which later gave its name to a style of filmmaking that reached a peak of popularity during the 1960s and 1970s. Since its inception, the Turkish film industry has focused on the struggles – whether social, personal or political – experienced by a people caught between two cultures, European and Islamic. This is especially important in a country which for the past half-century has made strenuous efforts to join the European Union, yet keeps being repelled by an institution that remains fearful of the ‘Islamic other’. The Turkish Republic, meanwhile, has been reluctant to consider itself a part of the Middle East, even though it shares its religion with neighbouring countries such as Iraq and Egypt.

Gönül Dönmez-Colin’s *Turkish Cinema* discusses how filmmakers have explored these conflicts from the early 1920s to the present day, focusing in particular on issues of identity, distance and belonging. She contends that most Turkish citizens have more than one identity, being part of a nomadic population constantly on the move from the east to the west of the country, or (more ambitiously) travelling to mainland Europe in search of a better life. Nuri Bilge Ceylan’s award-winning film *Uzak/Distant* (2002) focuses on this issue, as the central character Mahmut (Muzaffer Özdemir) establishes a successful business in İstanbul and detaches himself from a cousin who visits him from the east. The cousin responds by reminding him of the roots he severed while trying to build a new identity in the urban environment. The German–Turkish filmmaker Fatih Akın explores similar conflicts amongst second-generation Turks in Germany; in *Gegen die Wand/Head On* (2004) he shows how two young people feel more at home amongst the German community than with their fellow Turks, who disapprove of their so-called ‘liberated’ lifestyles. Nonetheless, the question of identity politics has proved very contentious in a country whose national slogan is *Ne Mutlu Türküm Diyene* (Happy is he who can say ‘I am a Turk’). Anyone advocating alternative constructions of identity represents a threat to national stability. The filmmaker Yılmaz Güney repeatedly fell foul of a law which states that a person who explicitly insults being a Turk could be imprisoned for a term of six months to three years. His film *Umut/The Hope* (1970) – a expose of poverty and social inequality in the provincial city of Adana – was banned for propagating class and identity differences in a country where officially such differences do not exist. It was only deemed suitable for general release in Turkey two decades later.

Dönmez-Colin views distance as something both physical and metaphorical. It helps to account for the possibility of arabesque music in the cinema (as well as in other aspects of Turkish popular culture) that ‘idealized the rural home left behind and lamented the impossibility of return, offering the alternative of imposing the rural culture to the modern urban life’ (pp. 40–1). Ertem Eğilmez’s comedy *Arabesk/Arabesque* (1988) offers a wry comment on this genre. Distance can also be expressed in terms of gender relationships. Dönmez-Colin argues that women have frequently been represented as a metaphor for the nation in

Turkish cinema: westernized, but concerned with family stability; educated and free but possessing an acute gasp of morals and honour. Many male filmmakers have tried to reinforce such stereotypes – in other words, keeping a distance between themselves and their female characters, and thereby sustaining the fundamentally patriarchal structure of Turkish society. This is especially true of Nuri Bilge Ceylan, whose films focus predominantly on men while confining women to traditional roles. Although some women have been active in Turkish cinema, Dönmez-Colin argues that they have seldom ‘taken responsibility as outspoken and leading advocates ... [of] a new feminist social realism’ (p. 153). No one in the film industry – particularly producers and/or financiers – takes them very seriously.

The idea of belonging can have both positive and negative consequences. It helps to define a community – especially marginalized communities such as the Kurds, who until recently had little or no opportunity for self-expression. Kazım Öz’s *Toprak/The Land* (1999) focuses on a group of Kurds who have been driven out of their land by the Turkish army, while Şahin Gök’s Kurdish-language film *Siabend u Xece/Siabend and Xece* (1992) adapts a legendary love story to include images of everyday life in an attempt to comment on the history and struggles of the Kurdish people. Yet the idea of belonging may have negative consequences, especially for women seeking self-determination in defiance of their family’s wishes. Turkish cinema is rife with examples of young women suffering for having a sexual relationship out of marriage, or forced to submit to the archaic tradition of being a ‘bought bride’. Aydın Sayman’s *Janjan* (2007) shows that such ideas dictate women’s destiny in small towns, or suburban areas of İstanbul largely inhabited by migrant families.

Dönmez-Colin believes that while Turkish cinema has made great strides over the last eight decades, it is still preoccupied with questions of identity. She offers contrasting opinions – for example the Turkish Cypriot Derviş Zaim, who believes that modern filmmakers are basically ‘alluvionic’ – working independently but also parallel to one another. At times they come together, and at times spread apart: ‘This analogy, he believes, is accurate in defining the dynamics and diversity of the group, which pursues different styles and different forms of production, financing and distribution’ (p. 181). By contrast, the conservative filmmaker Halit Refiğ believes that all Turkish films recognized in the West (especially those that focus on ideas of difference) are antinationalist, as they conform to what westerners expect of Turks and the Turkish nation. In this respect, a film such Tunç Okan’s award-winning *Otobüs/The Bus* (1974) is not much different in terms of content from David Lean’s *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962); both depict the Turks as either simple-minded or sadistic. Erden Kıral, another conservative, observes that if filmmakers seek funding from Europe – for example, through the EURIMAGE fund – they are indulging in ‘self-orientalism’ (p. 218).

The issue of orientalism is not explored to any great extent in the book – I would have welcomed more discussion on how Turkish cinema imitates or differs from other cinemas in Europe, America and the Middle East. Sometimes Dönmez-Colin's writing is a little over-elaborate, suggesting that the book was written in Turkish and subsequently translated. Nonetheless *Turkish Cinema* provides non-Turkish readers with a welcome introduction to a subject which hitherto has received scant critical attention.

Rekin Teksoy's *Turkish Cinema*, written by one of Turkey's foremost critics – who for many years had a regular programme on state television called *Sinema ve Edebiyat/Cinema and Literature* – favours a chronological rather than a thematic approach, paying special attention to early filmmakers such as Muhsin Ertuğrul (who also helped to establish the Turkish State Theatre) and celebrated auteurs such as Yılmaz Güney. As a representative of the older generation of critics, Teksoy's main focus of interest centres on Turkish cinema before the mid 1990s. His chapter on 'The new generation' seems somewhat rushed, as if he were trying to cram as much factual information into as small a space as possible. On the other hand he devotes substantial attention to documentary cinema, ranging from early works such as *İstiklal/Independence* (1922) – focusing on Kemal Atatürk's struggle to rid his country of foreign occupiers – to recent work such as *Gelibolu/Gallipoli* (2005), an even-handed account of the tragic events of April 1916. Although hampered by a lack of financing, Tekin argues that documentaries are especially significant in a country which has experienced considerable political turmoil since the creation of the Republic in 1923 (with three military takeovers in 1960, 1971 and 1980). He bemoans the fact that major events in the past 'have not been documented and that examples of an activist cinema are severely lacking' (p. 132). Yet perhaps this is inevitable in a country where oppositional voices in the cinema (such as Güney) are ruthlessly silenced.

Anyone expecting any in-depth analysis will be disappointed with this book: Tekin offers short summaries of the work of individual directors and their major films. Unlike Dönmez-Colin – who incorporates English as well as Turkish-language sources – Teksoy incorporates only the major Turkish-language reference books in his bibliography. To his credit, however, he provides a useful chronology of Turkish cinema from 1895 onwards, incorporating significant political and social events as well as developments within the industry. This helps readers understand how politics has played a fundamental part in defining the agenda of most Turkish filmmakers. The book also contains over one hundred stills and reproductions of famous cinema posters. Both books provide an invaluable resource for anyone interested in Turkish cinema past and present. I look forward to more publications appearing on this subject, preferably focusing on more specific topics such as the work of individual directors.

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Jeffrey Sconce (ed.), *Sleaze Artists: Cinema at the Margins of Taste, Style and Politics*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007, 340 pp.

ERNEST MATHIJS

Sleaze Artists is a collection of essays on often little-known or derided works well outside the canon of film studies curricula: cliché horror movies, sexploitation, pornography, video nasties. Occasionally, the odd auteur pops up – someone like Todd Haynes, who double-dips in kitsch and art, or a semi-respectable figure such as Dario Argento, whose audacity makes him an accepted point of comparison to ‘film history proper’. But in most cases the contributions in *Sleaze Artists* tackle films and filmmakers at the very margins of cinema. Simply for putting such films under academic scrutiny *Sleaze Artists* is to be celebrated – though it is a pity there is not more room for films from outside the North American frame of reference (a frame that apparently accommodates Italian popular cinema very well, but seemingly not Asian film). Sconce has managed to assemble a lineup of expert contributors, each one of them a seasoned scholar of popular and lowbrow cinema. The sheer wealth of information they unearth makes *Sleaze Artists* a most valuable and much needed addition to the study of cinema.

Although *Sleaze Artists* discusses wildly eccentric movies, the publication of the collection does not occur in an academic vacuum. Scholarship of films generally described as ‘trash’, ‘exploitation’, ‘cult’ or ‘bad’ is experiencing huge growth, which editor Jeffrey Sconce’s essay on paracinema, published in 1995, helped to start.¹ *Sleaze Artists* has the ability to become equally important, especially in the way it encapsulates the diversity of the subject and in offering research that through its care, rigour and relevance will further understanding of how the whole of cinema operates in the world.

A decade ago, scholars of film could still raise colleagues’ eyebrows if they selected ‘trash’ cinema as their subject for research. Simply by proposing to study ‘lesbian vampire exploitation’ or ‘punk horror’, or, to take Sconce’s example, to insist that *Jurassic Park 2: the Lost World* outranks *Schindler’s List* as ‘Spielberg’s greater achievement’ (p. 7), one was able to expose many of the pretensions of academia and film criticism and their slavish submission to ‘seriousness’. By and large, the academic study of ‘bad’ movies has moved beyond that novelty effect. It had to – exclamation marks besides titles and subjects are no longer sufficient to make a point. Instead, scholarship of bad cinema has developed increasingly sophisticated methods of analysis and definitions within its subject area – including conceptualizations of fandom, excess, reception and public presence. *Sleaze Artists* is a collection that joins that new surge. It has enough conviction and new ideas to be an excellent step in demonstrating how the study of bad movies also improves explanations of some of the most fundamental workings of today’s popular culture. Throughout this book much attention is directed towards

1 Jeffrey Sconce, “‘Trashing’ the academy: taste, excess and an emerging politics of cinematic style”, *Screen*, vol. 36, no. 4 (1995), pp. 371–93.

- 2 David Bordwell, *Making Meaning: Inference and Rhetoric in the Interpretation of Cinema* (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 20.

how receptions are 'framed', that is, governed by cultural forces outside the film text. Eric Schaefer chronicles how advertising efforts steered the sexploitation audience; Colin Gunckel unravels the anatomy of Mexican horror and links it to conflicting attitudes towards Mexico's indigenous population; Kevin Heffernan's analysis of the distribution and reception of Mario Bava's *Lisa and the Devil* paints a portrait of how an international network of film cultures that combines arthouse and exploitation affiliations tries (and fails) to find a niche for the film; and Joan Hawkins pulls Todd Haynes's films out of their indie-arthouse niche and positions them in a framework that treats their celebration of lowbrow popular culture as a key characteristic.

The rise of scholarship in cult, exploitation and trash cinema has also rearranged the very notion of film appreciation and criticism. When bad films are hailed – tongue in cheek or not – as masterpieces and sleazy movies are accorded the serious attention usually reserved for the 'legitimate' canon of cinema, the conditions that govern film appreciation are exposed and notions of what counts as 'good' are problematized. As a result, terms such as 'cinephilia', 'fandom' and 'criticism' need to be treated as what David Bordwell has called 'invisible colleges': dictators of statute rather than detectors of achievement.² The consequence is that discussions of trash, cult and exploitation cinema tend to move swiftly into 'meta' mode, debating types of appreciation (and their cultural conditions) as much as types of cinema. A good example of this, and one that admirably pushes the envelope, is Matt Hills's essay 'Para-paracinema: the *Friday the 13th* series as other to trash and legitimate film cultures' (pp. 219–39). Hills observes that much of the opposition between 'high' and 'low' cinema painted by academic criticism is false in its sharpness and in its assumption that all trash is internally equal or indistinguishable, even when it praises trash as alternative to the canon. In doing so, Hills argues, much criticism fails to see the intrageneric struggle of fan and subcultures. Hills's point is an excellent one, even if he does not immediately link it to examples of why exactly the *Friday the 13th* franchise is such a perfect illustration: the speed and industriousness with which sequels were produced differentiate it from other franchises (and surely set it up as less 'distinctive'), as do the careless and occasionally clumsy acting, the crude, street-credible special effects, the cameo performances (such as David Cronenberg as Dr Wimmer in *Jason X*); all of these elements allow viewers and fans to create credible separations between *Friday* and other lowbrow horror. And, if one pushes Hills's point about intrageneric struggles just a tad further, one could even accept that the *Friday* series in itself presents an internal struggle in which, for instance, the reflexivity and parody attempted by a director of a sequel run across the streamlined application of formula a producer wants to see highlighted – or vice versa.

Since much subcultural perception depends on coded readings of filmic 'excess', *Sleaze Artists* expends considerable effort outlining such

readings. Tania Modleski highlights how the career of sexploitation icon Doris Wishman, and especially her films with Chesty Morgan, needs to be set against that of both the 'mainstream' of exploitation *and* of burgeoning feminist film theory to reveal fully how its representation of the excessive sexual body mirrors its refusal to fit any mould. Similarly, Harry Benshoff revisits representations of coded homosexuality in films about the military such as *Reflections in a Golden Eye* and *The Sergeant*. Both Modleski's and Benshoff's essays say as much about the late 1960s implicit sensibilities as they do about the films themselves. A very particular attention to excess is offered by Kay Dickinson's intelligent analysis of the soundtracks of 1980s video nasties. Dickinson argues convincingly that the disjunction between image and sound that many nasties create has helped them gain the peculiar status they occupy in popular culture.

The moments of confusion or disorientation offered by Wishman's excesses, the homo-military movie's odd codifications, and the video nasties' aural disjunctions are all examples of what Sconce, in his editorial introduction, calls 'tiny shocks of recognition' (p. 9). Sconce builds this observation on Pauline Kael's famous 1968 essay 'Trash, art and the movies', which chronicles a veteran reviewer's all-too seldom moments of exhilaration during movie-watching.³ It also relies on Roland Barthes's observation that critics who have gained expertise in a certain form of text will grow tired of that form, and will instead start looking for a 'text of bliss' (p. 9). Robert Stam has called this the critical desire to look for a film's 'breaking-points, its lapses and silences, its structuring absences and constitutive lacks'.⁴ Sconce sees the likelihood that bad cinema will offer such jolts, through accident, malevolence or incompetence, as one of the main reasons why there is an intellectual interest in bad movies. He writes: 'this desire for a shock of recognition, a random moment of poetic perversity, the epiphany of the unexpected, remains a major current in the cinephile's seemingly unquenchable desire to "talk less about good movies than what they love in bad movies"' (p. 9).

The two chapters that best exemplify this search for 'desire' are Chris Fujiawara's eloquent discussion of boredom and Chuck Kleinhans's equally clever contribution on the 'contract of complicity' between viewers and producers of sleaze. Fujiwara isolates 'boredom' as a mode of perception that pertains to be the opposite of 'desire', but he acknowledges it as an equally affective one. Like Dickinson, Fujiwara asserts that the lack of cohesion between elements of a film affects the spectator's perception. But unlike Dickinson and Sconce he sees not just 'jolts' as the result, but a switching off of meaning-seeking altogether. Instead, Fujiwara claims, a state emerges that allows for time to pass while knowing no 'value' or 'meaning' will be gained, a willful submission to pointless waiting – that is boredom. For Fujiawara, 'boredom is a state of freedom' (p. 243) that is connected to 'low culture' because it sidesteps issues of quality, but that is also liberating in its

3 Pauline Kael, 'Trash, art and the movies', in *Going Steady: Film Writings, 1968–1969* (London: Marion Boyars, 1994).

4 Robert Stam, *Film Theory: an Introduction* (Boston, MA: Blackwell, 2000), p. 135.

disconnections with traditions of meaning-making. When Kleinhans analyzes the appearance of the fake 'expert' in mondo films and reality TV (the 'voice of sobriety' who plays on the viewers' 'reverse disavowal' – their self-rationalization for pleasure from 'naughty' material), he too appears to address exactly the kind of desire for badness Sconce is looking for. It prefers moments above texts.

Boredom is, of course, also a privilege associated with a certain socioeconomic status – especially when it is publicly articulated. Is such articulation shared by those who have to scramble to make ends meet, those who cannot afford to admit their boredom, let alone celebrate it? Only Kleinhans seems to think so. For him, the ironic, condescending interest in debased material that is 'sleaze' is never separated from class issues. His recurrent use of terms referring to exchange of capital and labour (such as 'payoffs') even seems to imply that sleaze is a consumption pattern inextricably linked to economic status – a taste of the poor, as it were.

This brings us to one of the few flaws in *Sleaze Artists*: its lack of interest in examining considerations of socioeconomic and cultural status. Much of Sconce's rationale in assembling this collection – to examine the desire to love bad movies in spite of decades of 'perpetually disgruntled' movie criticism (p. 275) – is good; it generates new insights into how audiences and experts can favour the thrill of a salient moment over the sustained pleasure of an entire text. Insightful too is Sconce's lament that the contemporary attitude of 'snark, negative cinephilia, and cine-cynicism' (p. 277), and the 'obsession with futility and failure in cinema' is a form of Leavisism that fails to account for the feeling of 'dispossession' many cinephiles feel – insightful because it exposes much of the underlying interest critics and scholars have in making movies mean something in the first place (p. 292). But to see all of this as an exhaustion of cinephilia without considering the particular conditions of class, ethnicity, location, timing or gender within which such cinephilia exists is, I think, problematic.

For one, Sconce's use of the term 'cinephilia' in his introduction, but also in his closing chapter, is indifferent to potential discrepancies with cultism, fandom, geekdom or film-buffery, or to dissimilarities between the modes of cult, trash, sleaze or exploitation – it ignores the internal distinctions Hills argues are central to the study of these types of cinema. It is unclear if Sconce sees cinephilia as different from other forms of film appreciation, or if this does not matter. Is it a kind of cinephilia that Greg Taylor, in what is one of the best chapters in *Sleaze Artists*, calls 'cultist' because it aims to avoid 'the scourge of middlebrow sterility by trawling the depths of a mass culture that others either ignored or took for granted' (p. 259)? There is certainly a parallel. For Taylor, cultism these days, just like cinephilia, is becoming less and less oppositional as a cultural action. But, he argues, in full denial of its lack of opposition, cultism revels in pitching ever more obscure details and elevating ever more mindless material onto a pedestal. The parallel between Sconce's view on

cinophilia and Taylor's cultism stops when the latter hints that cultism is an attitude that is, at least partly, rooted in cultural status. Sconce's notion of cinophilia, in contrast, is designed to avoid such cultural-political baggage; a focus on cultural 'jockeying for position' (p. 8) is precisely what he wants to avoid. In an attempt to move beyond the work of Bourdieu, the most common point of reference for studies of cultural positioning, Sconce proposes an approach that aims to investigate 'sincere passion for deviant cinema' (p. 8), or, as he pleads in his closing chapter:

a poetics up to the task of engaging the profoundly bizarre, disturbing, inane, and epiphal moments that characterize our current cinematic plight, a poetics that no longer brackets off the cinema from the entire field of cultural production but instead integrates the incomplete (and often arbitrary) object on the screen with the strategic beauty of a well-executed billboard campaign, the demographic chicanery of a misleading trailer, the reinscription and retextualization of the DVD release, the ineffable mechanisms of 'buzz' that situate films, performers, and audiences in seemingly random empathetic and adversarial relationships. We need a poetics that follows every moment of every film back through its fleeting diegetic illusions to the profilmic nexus of strategies that give shape to every frame. (pp. 305–6)

Agreed, and I have myself argued for such a perspective for some time.⁵ But why not add the careful attention to a film's postfilmic life to this? Surely such a poetics should also not separate the love of bad, exploitative, cult cinema from the socioeconomic conditions of its reception. Throughout much of *Sleaze Artists* the impression persists that viewing strategies and instances that facilitate the celebration of bad movies (actions such as snarking, boredom, experiencing 'jolts', cheap thrills, reverse disavowal) are free of constraint, as if any viewer regardless of their socioeconomic position can decide to engage or disengage them without obstructions. Is that really the case? Mark Jancovich has observed that for some subcultural viewers such freedom is not available – too much is at stake in carving out distinctions.⁶ Because we can imagine that for some audiences *Friday the 13th Part VIII (Jason takes Manhattan)*, The Stone Roses' second album or *The Jerry Springer Show* might be the only affordable experience (not just in terms of monetary capital but time capital as well), and because we can imagine that no opportunity might be available for much further 'trawling', we can also imagine, and understand, that a default choice is turned into a militant conviction – 'I love *Friday the 13th* because it was what I could afford to use as a means of distinction'. To neglect attention to the socioeconomic, 'clinical' and 'rationalist' aspects of such conditions might be to miss opportunities to fully understand the watching of bad movies.

5 See, for instance, Ernest Mathijs, 'Bad reputations: the reception of trash cinema', *Screen*, vol. 46, no. 4 (2005), pp. 451–72; Ernest Mathijs (ed.), *The Lord of the Rings: Popular Culture in Global Context* (London: Wallflower Press, 2006); Ernest Mathijs, *The Cinema of David Cronenberg: From Baron of Blood to Cultural Hero* (London: Wallflower Press, 2008).

6 Mark Jancovich, 'Cult fictions: cult movies, subcultural capital and the production of cultural distinctions', in Ernest Mathijs and Xavier Mendik (eds), *The Cult Film Reader* (London: Open University Press, 2008), pp. 149–62.

To have a single book address both the desire that makes people love bad movies, and the cultural conditions that puts them in positions to do so (or not to do so) is probably asking too much. Therefore, it should be made clear that my few reservations on conceptualizations of spectatorship and problems of cinephilia are based on qualms about details, which perhaps only experts in the same field of sub-expertise (geeks or cultists, in other words) would find relevant. If one rises above and beyond that, and if one reads *Sleaze Artists* as a contribution to the study of popular cinema, it emerges as an exquisite collection of writing and a demonstration of excellent scholarship.

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Biographies

Roy Armes is Emeritus Professor of Film at Middlesex University and author, most recently, of *Dictionary of African Filmmakers* (2008). His current project is a complementary dictionary of Arab filmmakers from the Middle East, due to appear in 2010.

Kay Dickinson lectures in Media and Communications at Goldsmiths College, University of London. She is author of *Off Key: When Film and Music Won't Work Together* (2008) and is currently researching Arab cinema in relation to various modes of travel.

Kim Knowles is Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the University of Kent. She is author of *A Cinematic Artist: the Films of Man Ray* (2009), as well as a number of articles on avant-garde film and photography. She is director of Diversions Film Festival and curates the experimental section of the Edinburgh International Film Festival.

Maggie Magor was formerly a Research Fellow in the Centre for Cultural Policy Research at the University of Glasgow.

Ernest Mathijs is Associate Professor in Film Studies at the University of British Columbia, where he also leads the Centre for Cinema Studies. He is author of *The Cinema of David Cronenberg* (2008) and coeditor of *The Cult Film Reader* (2008). With Jamie Sexton he edits the book series Cultographies, online and published by Wallflower Press.

David Martin-Jones is Senior Lecturer in Film Studies at the University of St Andrews, Scotland. He is author of *Deleuze, Cinema and National Identity* (2006), *Scotland: Global Cinema* (2009, forthcoming), and coauthor with Damian Sutton of *Deleuze Reframed* (2008). He is on the editorial boards of *Film-Philosophy* and *A/V: the Journal of Deleuzian Studies*.

Soledad Montañez is a PhD candidate in the Department of Spanish, at the University of St Andrews, Scotland. Her thesis examines women's writing in Uruguay in the second half of the twentieth century. Her most recent publications include an article on Uruguayan cinema in *Studies in Hispanic Cinemas* (2008) and a contribution to *Women, Gender and Discourse in Latin America* (2009).

Laurence Raw teaches in the Department of English at Başkent University, Ankara, Turkey. His main research interests focus on adaptation studies as well as Turkish cinema. He has recently published on Tunç Okan as well as on the early work of the filmmaker Lutfi Ö. Akad.

Vicente Sánchez-Biosca is Professor of Film Studies at the University of Valencia, Spain, and editor of the journal *Archivos de la Filmoteca*. Most recently he is author of *Cine y guerra civil española* (2006) and *Cine de*

historia, cine de memoria (2006), and coauthor, with R.R. Tranche, of *NO-DO: el tiempo y la memoria* (2000). He is the main researcher of a project on the iconography of the Spanish Civil War.

Philip Schlesinger is Professor in Cultural Policy and Academic Director of the Centre for Cultural Policy Research at the University of Glasgow. He is currently working on an AHRC-funded project on 'Music and dance: beyond copyright text?'

John Shanks read Hispanic Studies and Film Studies at Queen Mary, University of London. He now lives and works between Cádiz in south-west Spain, where he is translating into English the works of contemporary playwright Juan García Larrondo, and London, where he is currently researching the links between cinema, perception and cognition.

Paul Sutton is Principal Lecturer in Film at Roehampton University. His areas of research specialism are French and Italian cinema, film theory, cinematic spectatorship and the remake. He is currently writing *Remaking Film: In History, In Theory*.

Gil Toffell is Leverhulme Early Career Fellow in the Department of Film Studies (School of Languages, Linguistics and Film) at Queen Mary, University of London. He is currently researching Jewish cinema culture in interwar Britain.

David Trotter is King Edward VII Professor of English Literature at the University of Cambridge. He cofounded the Cambridge Screen Media Group, and is currently Director of the University's MPhil in Screen Media and Cultures. His most recent book is *Cinema and Modernism* (2007).

Emma Wilson is Reader in Contemporary French Literature and Film at the University of Cambridge. Her most recent book is a study of Atom Egoyan (2009).

Notes to Contributors

There has recently been a major development in the submission and processing of manuscripts at *Screen*. On 1 March 2009, after much discussion and in collaboration with our publisher OUP, we switched to the **Manuscript Central** online submission system. Many readers will already be familiar with this method, but for those who are not, it will in essence mean that manuscripts are submitted through the Manuscript Central site, and thereafter all communications between editorial office, author and peer reviewers will be channelled through, and logged by, the system.

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1. Christian Metz, *Psychoanalysis and Cinema: the Imaginary Signifier*, trans. Celia Britton et al. (London: Macmillan, 1982).
2. Ginette Vincendeau, 'Melodramatic realism: on some French women's films in the 1930s', *Screen*, vol. 30, no. 3 (1989), pp. 51–65.
3. Monika Treut, 'Female misbehaviour', in Laura Pietropaolo and Ada Testaferri (eds), *Feminisms in the Cinema* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995), pp. 106–21.

References to *films* in both notes and main text should include full title, and in the case of non-English language films original release title should precede US and/or British release title, followed by director and release date in round brackets:

A bout de souffle/Breathless (Jean-Luc Godard, 1960)

Where such information is relevant to the argument, details of production company and/or country of origin may also be included:

The Big Sleep (Howard Hawks, Warner Bros, US, 1945)

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